

# Charting the River: A case study of English language teaching in Bangladesh

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## **Abstract**

This study charts and navigates the complex waterways of English language teaching in Bangladesh. Taking river as a metaphor it aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the main currents of English language teaching.

The research design is an emergent one. In a broader sense it is a case study that explores English language teaching within a specific country's context and there are multiple embedded cases within the large case. The participants are students, teachers, teacher trainers, parents, principals and other professionals. Data came from the stories my participants told me about their experiences, my observations, classroom artefacts, document analysis and reports from large scale projects.

Previous research in English language teaching in Bangladesh has focused on specific practices mainly exploring problems associated with English language teaching. In contrast to previous research, this study while acknowledging the value of more specifically targeted investigations, provides a composite picture of English language teaching in Bangladesh.

The initial study in the thesis utilised a survey to investigate teachers' beliefs about effective teaching quality, reports of their practice, and the barriers encountered. Analysis of the survey indicated a number of areas where there were contradictions between respondents' claimed understanding and their reported practices. These indicated areas for further investigation. The analysis revealed five influential factors that shapes English language teaching in Bangladesh.

The first factor was the operation of the examination system and the ways it dominates education. I report teachers', students' and parents' attitudes to examinations. These affirmed the power of the examination system in directing teaching practices and also revealed the extent to which the examination system was upheld by expectations of families and wider communities.

The next is the importance of communicative uses of English for business, education, social status and entry into other countries. I report participants' stories of why English is important to them and discuss the difficulties encountered in developing a communicative approach to English teaching.

The third factor is the various ways in which English teachers are trained and the institutions and projects that provide the training. A number of gaps and problems are identified. Inadequate provision of pre- service and in-service training opportunities for teachers is one of the main barriers to develop teachers professionally.

This study also reports the disparity that exists in terms of access, available resources and opportunities in urban, rural and slum areas. Of all, slum inhabitants are the most deprived. Rural areas lag behind in terms of infrastructural facilities, available resources and quality teachers. This divide is also one of wealth and so the limited educational opportunities of students in urban slums are also examined.

The fifth issue is the impact of international influences on English language teaching in Bangladesh. Legacies of colonialism and pressures of neo-colonialism are explored. Also examined is the impact of English as a global *lingua franca* and the role and the influence of international providers of loans and aid.

This study identified that English language teaching in Bangladesh takes place in a context that is complex and multifaceted. The overarching implication of the findings is that policy shifts and plans for implementation need to consider these complexities.

This research acknowledges the value of western knowledge as an additional critical lens but advocates a Bangladesh epistemological approach that builds on the grounded realities of the forces that shape life and schooling in Bangladesh rather than the replication of foreign models.

## Chapter One: Introduction

তোমার খোলা হাওয়া লাগিয়ে পালে, টুকরো করে কাছি,	<i>Let your unfettered breeze catch my sail and tear to shreds my moorings</i>
ডুবতে রাজি আছি, আমি ডুবতে রাজি আছি॥	<i>For I am willing, I am willing to take the plunge,</i>
সকাল আমার গেল মিছে, বিকেল যে যায় তারি মিছে	<i>My morning has gone in vain and my evening threatens to follow suit</i>
গো, রেখো না আর, বেঁধো না আর কুলের কাছাকাছি॥	<i>Don't keep me tied anymore so close to the shore</i>

Rabindranath Thakur<sup>1</sup>

Bangladesh is a land of rivers. Its rivers offer a ready means of transport and they also isolate some communities. With the fish that swim in their waters and the irrigation they give to paddy fields they provide an abundant food basket. When the Himalayan snows melt the rivers bring rich alluvial soil that makes the land richly fertile; they also bring floods that destroy crops, embankments and people. They sparkle in gentle weather and they are fierce and wild in storms. With these many faces they afford a metaphor for the complexity of the issue which I have researched. They give rise to the title I have chosen for this thesis.

The river boatman is a popular figure in Bangladesh folklore and in many poems and songs, such as the one by Rabindranath Thakur from which I have cited few lines above. The boatman needs to know the river and all its moods and currents so that he can navigate them. As my research unfolded I came to see my role in this study in terms of the boatman learning to know the complex and seasonal currents of the river. I found I needed to move away from the fixed shores reported by previous research studies of English teaching in Bangladesh and to explore the complexities that shape the content,

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<sup>1</sup> This song is a very well known love song in Bangladesh. However, I have used it in terms of its wider symbolism of the river, and the need to step out from a safe predictable space. I have taken the first four line of the song and the English translation is taken from the book: *The Rabindranath Tagore: The Singer and his song* by Reba Som.

directions and limitations of the curriculum and of teaching. As such, this thesis is an initial charting of the waterways of ESL teaching and learning in Bangladesh.

This chapter provides an introduction to the study. Firstly it outlines the purpose and the overall context of the research. Then it indicates the overall methodological approach I have taken and explains my own positionality within the research and the field. Next it sketches aspects of the Bangladesh social and educational context that I think are important for readers to be familiar with as they read this thesis. After that it briefly reviews existing research literature about English language programmes and teaching in Bangladesh and identifies some of the gaps that exist. Finally it provides an outline of the chapters that will follow.

### **Purpose of the study**

This thesis explores the following questions:

What shapes English language teaching in Bangladesh?

How do the English teachers in Bangladesh secondary schools navigate the complex waterways of English language teaching?

Over the last decade English teaching in Bangladesh has seen great changes in a number of ways. Nowadays it is not surprising to see a teacher is using innovative teaching activities in his or her class in a remote rural school. There are items of modern teaching equipment, audio-video teaching materials, computers and overhead projectors, and internet facilities. However, it is also not surprising to learn that when a teacher, who has just completed training to use modern equipment, comes to teach in the class in rural areas of Bangladesh, he finds that there is no electricity in the school.

Students sometimes come to school on foot from quite far away. In the rainy season they may come by boat and when the weather is rough they do not come to school. They also do not come to school during the harvest season because they have to help the family in harvesting crops. Sometimes more than hundred students have to sit in one class and interactive teaching activities become impossible for a single teacher, even for an experienced teacher.

English in Bangladesh is considered as a vehicle of change and development both by individuals and by government and plays an important role in education, administration,

judiciary, trade and foreign communication. English is also considered as a vehicle for better access to the wider world, and such access in turn is expected to contribute to the economic growth of Bangladesh.

Over many years, a Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was the dominant method of teaching English at secondary and higher secondary levels in Bangladesh. Textbooks at the secondary and the higher secondary level mainly comprised various literary texts such as prose, poetry, and short stories. Reading and writing were the main components of the language learning and only students' reading and writing capabilities were tested in the examination. In the grammar-translation based English curriculum, emphasis was on content memorisation instead of acquiring skills for practical communication. As a result, after twelve years of formal schooling, students found it difficult to communicate in English.

To improve English language teaching at secondary and higher secondary levels many reform initiatives have been taken. These have included adoption of a communicative based curriculum, large scale investigative and teacher training projects, new English textbooks following the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), introduction of multimedia in teaching, providing ICT equipment to schools, introducing an examination for teachers' registration as a prerequisite for becoming a teacher for the non-government schools and colleges. The nature of questions in various high stake English tests has changed to align with the new English curriculum. The Bangladesh National Curriculum, 2012, emphasised communicative use of English and put much emphasis on using English in real-life situations. The new curriculum put emphasis on the importance of properly trained teachers to implement the communicative goal.

A syllabus focusing on communicative language was introduced in 1996, and replaced the previous grammar-translation based syllabus. The English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) was one of the major initiatives which aimed at implementing a CLT approach to language teaching at secondary and higher secondary levels.

Despite many reform initiatives and different large scale projects, it is generally accepted that little has been changed in teaching and learning English in Bangladesh, and to some extent the standard of teaching English has even deteriorated (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

Some of the reasons behind this stagnation and possible deterioration are often identified as different institutional and infrastructural constraints including large classes, excessive teaching loads, limited resources, inadequate teacher training, test-driven teaching, discrepancy between curriculum goals and strategies to implement policy. The number of students achieving GPA 5 (the highest grade possible in various national examinations) has increased dramatically over the last few years. However, it is a matter of concern that students with GPA 5 sometimes failed to achieve a pass mark in various university admission tests (Jaif, 2012). Questions have been raised about the appropriateness and relevance of the communicative language teaching approach in a Bangladesh secondary school context (Chowdhury, 2010). The examination system is often criticised for assessing students' memorisation skills rather than their language skills (Hossain, 2009). There is disagreement about the role of grammar and literature in English teaching in Bangladesh. As a result grammar and literature are sometimes ignored completely and sometimes overemphasised.

The debate about the quality of education in Bangladesh has reached to popular media as well as academic circles. Newspapers often criticise educationists saying teachers and students are only concerned with passing the examination, and it has been argued that asking students to sit in the Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE) and Junior School Certificate (JSC) examinations after the Class V and Class VIII respectively is destroying students' learning (Khan, 2016). On the other hand the Prime Minister of Bangladesh stated that the PECE and J.S.C examinations after the Class V and Class VIII respectively make students self-confident and better prepared to face examinations in their later life (The Daily Inqilab, 2017). Thus the complexities involved in teaching/learning English need to be examined from multiple perspectives. There seem to be no easy answers.

This thesis sets out to chart some of the contextual pressures and opportunities that impact on effective English teaching in Bangladesh.



## **Methodological approach**

This is a qualitative case study where the participants are teachers, teacher trainers, students, parents and other professionals. In the first instance it is envisaged that the case as a whole involves the teaching of English in Bangladesh. Within this overarching case there are multiple cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994) involving the experiences of individual students and teachers, as well as reports from larger groups and projects.

The design is an emergent one. I began the study wanting to find some examples of effective English teaching to stand beside existing research findings of overall failings within the systems of teaching English in Bangladesh. I hoped to examine the practices of teachers who were considered by their peers to be effective and so develop models that might be useful for future teacher development. I began with the survey reported in Chapter Three. Through this survey I wanted to explore the beliefs of a large group of teachers about the English curriculum and the various elements involved in teaching it as well as how they would report their practice. I saw this as the baseline against which effective practice could be considered. I next intended to identify teachers who were considered to be effective by their peers and examine their backgrounds, experiences, beliefs and practices. As I report in Chapter Two I soon found that this plan was overly simplistic. Some teachers who were widely considered as effective seemed to pay little attention to the broader curriculum goals of communicative language teaching. Other teachers in small remote communities were unacknowledged outside their immediate environment but were deeply committed to their students' learning of oral as well as written English. Moreover, students, parents and teacher trainers held very diverse opinions about effective English teaching. In addition, my initial survey showed a very significant gap between participants' reported beliefs about English teaching and their reported practices. I realised I needed to explore the wider factors that influenced the nature of English teaching beyond teacher knowledge of curriculum expectation. The emergent design of my exploration is reported in Chapter Two and various aspects of my findings are reported in Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight.

Much of the data I collected came in the form of participants' stories of their experiences and intentions. In my account I have preserved the narrative quality of these stories. I have also drawn on published policies, national statistics, newspaper reports, project

reports and other forms of public data. And because I am myself Bangladeshi, I have also drawn on my own experience of the social contexts of Bangladesh and its education system.

### **My personal and professional experiences in the field**

My experience of teaching and learning in Bangladesh has significance in my choice of my broad research area. I have experience of the educational settings where this study is based. English was my favourite subject in my childhood. Apart from attending English classes in the school, I studied English with a private tutor, and I was one of his favourite students. He used to teach me different grammatical rules, engaged me in translation, and suggested different essays and reading passages necessary for the examination. I enjoyed studying English and I was also quite good at memorisation. Even though I was from a rural area, I continuously scored very high in English examinations compared with other subjects. Besides, my father, who was a teacher before moving to another job, taught me at home. From my childhood, I was fond of cricket and I watched almost every match telecasted on television. While I was watching I tried to understand what the commentator was saying and later I repeated all his comments myself although there was no intention at that stage to improve my listening or speaking skills. However, I acknowledge now that my love of cricket helped me to a great extent to improve my listening and speaking skills in English.

I have experience of teaching English in Bangladesh at a secondary and tertiary levels. As a teacher my realisation is that most of the activities in the classes at secondary level in Bangladesh are directly or indirectly influenced by the examination. It is very challenging for a teacher to engage students in activities if students are not convinced that these activities are helpful for the examination. I used to talk to students frequently about their personal interests, about what they liked about learning English and what problems they faced. I also taught some secondary English teachers. I talked to them about their teaching: the things they enjoyed and the constraints they faced. I have also taught English, mainly to immigrants in the United Kingdom where I had to plan and develop course materials. It was challenging in the sense that, unlike Bangladesh, there was no prescribed textbooks from which to teach. I had to take decisions about materials and

methods of teaching. Working there helped me to understand and make sense of working independently.

## **The context of Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is a small, densely populated country in South Asia with an area of 147,000 square kilometres and with a population of 160 million. Of the total population 34% people are living in urban areas and urban migration is increasing day by day (World Bank, n.d.). One of the largest deltas in the world, the country shares encircling borders with India and a small border with Myanmar in the south. There are some hilly areas in the country but there is mostly plain low land throughout the country. Many rivers flow through the country. In Bangladesh there are six seasons and each of them is recognisable from their distinctive characteristics. During the monsoon it rains heavily and water comes from the Himalayas and often causes floods.

Ethnically Bangladesh is a mono-ethnic country as 98% of its people are Bengali in origin and different tribal communities comprise a small portion of the total population. The tribal communities mainly live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and a small portion lives in the north-west part of Bangladesh near the border. Linguistically Bangladesh is a monolingual country as 98% of its people speak Bangla as their mother tongue (Rahman, 2010). Different tribal people speak their own languages but many of the tribal people speak Bangla as well. As Bangla is the official language of communication, education and other official functions, the tribal people are required to learn Bangla to communicate with the wider society and for many other purposes such as education and employment. There are various types of regional dialects spoken in different parts of the country (such as Sylhety in Sylhet region, local varieties of Bangla by Chittagong and Noakhali people), but they are only spoken when they communicate with each other in their community. There are around 300,000 Urdu-speaking Bihari who mainly live in a specific area (known as Bihari Palli) in Dhaka. They are a group of people who migrated from a state of

India called Bihar and who were in Bangladesh during the War of Independence and still live in the country.

There are several mega-cities in Bangladesh and within them a middle class has recently developed which tends to consider speaking English as a matter of prestige. These families talk in English, or at least in the form of code switching between English and Bangla. Many of them tend to send their children to English medium schools.

One reason why Bangladesh is ethnically and linguistically monolingual is that its economy has yet to reach in a position to make the country attractive to people of other nations to come and live in Bangladesh. In recent times a considerable number of people from Myanmar are entering the country but they adapt easily inside Bangladesh as they also speak Bangla and because they have been a neighbouring country they know the Bengali people and culture reasonably well. Religiously, Islam is the dominant religion as 89% of people are Muslims, followed by 10% Hindu. The 1.2% of others includes Buddhists, Christians and other religions. However Bangladesh has been known for its religious tolerance and people of different religions have lived in peace without any major sectarian conflicts.

## **Economy**

Despite various developmental problems like political instability, lack of infrastructures, inadequate planning, some corruption, and insufficient power supply, Bangladesh's economy is growing steadily. This was evident in the country's GDP growth: in the year 2016 the GDP growth was 7.05% (World Bank, 2016). Bangladesh's economy is largely agriculture based but textile and readymade garments are contributing to a great extent to the country's economy. In the recent past Bangladesh has made good progress in per capita income. For example, in 2015 the gross domestic per capita was USD 1291 and in 2017 it is estimated at USD 1508 (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2016). Bangladesh's readymade garments industry, which is mainly export oriented, is the main source of earning foreign currency. The economy continues to grow despite the recent political turmoil at the beginning of the year 2015, and threats to primary businesses as a

result of accidents like building collapses and fires in factories, and of a recent terrorist attack in a hotel in the capital.

In addition a very large number of Bangladeshi people living and working abroad are contributing to the country's economy by sending foreign remittances. In this globalised world developing countries seek to strengthen their economy by sending their skilled and unskilled workforce to the developed countries. Bangladesh is also aiming to strengthen its economy by sending skilled and unskilled workers into many countries all over the world and many are waiting to move to other countries for employment. Bangladesh citizens migrate for both long term and short term into different western countries and into the Middle East. Having good English skills for different types of national and international jobs is thus considered vital.

The readymade garment industries account for 81% of the total export earnings (BGMEA, n.d.) and because of the cheap labour in Bangladesh this industry is flourishing day by day. Apart from that, there are many other industries that contribute to the country's economy. These include leather products, natural gas, cement, iron and steel, pharmaceuticals, fish, tea, handicrafts, shipbuilding and shipwrecking.

Despite these areas of progress Bangladesh is still a country with many social and political problems like corruption, poverty, civil unrest, frequent strikes, intolerable traffic jams and lack of planning and strategies for implementation of public resources and wealth. Moreover the country experiences frequent natural calamities like cyclones and floods that cause the loss of many lives. Bangladesh has been struggling to develop its infrastructures since Independence. The transport system is one example. There are inadequate roads and means of transport, compared with the number of people, and in the mega-cities especially long traffic jams are a common scene.

### **Urban and rural**

The gulf between urban and rural communities and levels of wealth is extremely high in Bangladesh and day by day the rich become richer and poor people's condition is deteriorating (Islam, 2013). Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas of Bangladesh and it is one of the reasons for urban migration. The main source of income of rural people is

agriculture and there are not many opportunities of income from other sources. The rural people of Bangladesh sometimes suffer from natural calamities that cause them immense sufferings. Of those flood is a very common, and almost every year different parts of Bangladesh are affected. It brings immense sorrows and suffering for rural people and causes loss of lives, destroys crops and communication systems. Sometimes, those who live by river banks lose their houses and become homeless. Thus they have no other option but to migrate in the city in search of livelihood and shelter and become dwellers of city slums.

The living conditions of slum dwellers in various cities are worse than those of the underprivileged very remote rural people. According to the UNICEF Report (2010) the inequalities between city slum dwellers and rich city people is huge. Most of these slum people cannot fulfil their basic needs. In most cases they do not have access to safe drinking water, toilets, basic medical services, and schools. These people are mainly from very remote and rural areas and come to cities in search of jobs and economic opportunities. They are the main labour forces of cities, including rickshaw pullers, workers in various readymade garments factories, construction workers, cleaners and street hawkers. Many of them cannot afford to live in a slum and thus are forced to live in train stations and on the streets. Women sometimes work as a domestic worker in different households. The UNICEF Report (2010) estimated that 20% of the children of these household aged between five and fourteen are involved in child labour.

However, village life in Bangladesh is more relaxed away from city crowds. Despite poverty and shortage of facilities people live in relative peace, harmony and tranquillity. There is no industrial pollution and lots of trees and green spaces make the environment pleasant and healthy. Village people generally walk and involve themselves in physical work. Farmers go out to the fields and take care of their domestic animal, if they have them. Some people catch fish in rivers and canals. In the evening they indulge themselves in some gossiping while having a cup of tea at a tea stall in the local bazaar or by the road. Women do household work and those who have television at home sometimes watch programmes in the evening. Children usually play various kinds of local games and sports in a nearby field or open area.

On the other hand, most of the industries and businesses in Bangladesh are city based. People migrated to cities from rural areas for various reasons. The World Bank data shows that in 2015, 66% of the total population of Bangladesh were living in rural areas, whereas in 1990 80% of the total population lived in rural areas (World Bank, n.d). The mega-cities in Bangladesh are the centres of business, industries, education, healthcare and all other modern facilities. Almost all big industries in Bangladesh have their business head offices either in Dhaka or Chittagong, the two main cities. Most of the modern medical facilities are Dhaka based, followed by different divisional cities. Almost 90% of the private universities are in Dhaka or nearby areas. The country's administrative headquarters, the Bangladesh Secretariat, the Bangladesh Supreme Court, in fact all the important sectors' headquarters, are in Dhaka. The most prominent and prestigious universities like Dhaka University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Dhaka Medical College, Banghabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University all are in one area in the heart of Dhaka city.

Among educated and rich people there is a trend to move to cities. Although they keep their tie with the village, the educated and rich always tend to seek opportunities to move to a city with a hope of getting a better life, better economic opportunities and to ensure good facilities for their children.

There is another side of city life: it is so crowded that living a healthy life seems near to impossible. There is hardly any open space; there is continuous air pollution, and loud and irritating noise from various industries and continuous traffic. High-rise buildings have been built everywhere without any formal city plan. People in the city suffer from lack of fresh and healthy food. Because there is hardly any place to grow food or vegetables, they always have to buy from the markets. Supplies sometimes come from distant parts of the country and to preserve the food for longer periods suppliers use chemicals which result in contaminated food supplies in the city.

In terms of entertainment in the city, people watch television, play computer games and use the internet, mostly at home. There is limited scope of outdoor activities and children hardly go to play outside.

Despite all hardships, people live in the city with a hope that their children will get better facilities. City dwellers have the capacity to invest in education and investment in

education is seen as a long term investment for greater profit in the future. On the other hand, in the village, especially in an underprivileged family, children are helping the family immediately by working in farming or in the family business.

### **Overview of the education system in Bangladesh**

The education system in Bangladesh is divided into three main stages: primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Primary education is comprised five years of formal schooling. Secondary education is a seven-year block subdivided into three stages: junior secondary (Class VI-VIII), secondary (Class IX-X) and higher secondary (Class XI-XII). According to the Article 17 of the Bangladesh Constitution, all children are entitled to get full free education up to secondary level (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliament affairs, 2010).

All the secondary schools are affiliated with one of the ten educational boards. These educational boards are responsible for administering three public examinations throughout the country. Students take part in the Junior School Certificate (JSC) examination after the Class VIII, the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination after the class X and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination after class XII. Tertiary education comprises of three to five years of formal study and is provided by the public and private universities, and National University affiliated colleges (Ministry of Education, 2017). Apart from the mainstream education, there is Madrasha (religious belief based) education which is regulated by the Bangladesh Madrasha Education Board.

After the completion of JSC, students also have the option to study in different vocational institutions. Students in these institutions study technical subjects.

There are English medium schools, which are run mainly by non-government authorities, and these schools follow British curricula. The medium of study at these schools is English, except for Bengali and Religious Studies that are taught in Bangla and Arabic respectively. Students of these schools prepare for the Cambridge 'O' and 'A' level examinations. Both examinations are managed by the University of London or Cambridge University with the help of the British Council. The setting of questions and the evaluation of answer sheets are finalised in England.



The Bangladesh education system is a centralised education system that is largely maintained by the different wings of the government of Bangladesh. Primary education is overseen by the Directorate of Primary Education and the secondary education is maintained by the eight General Education Boards, one Madrasha Education Board and one Technical Education Board. There are 20,297 institutions that offer secondary education and of them only 331 are government institutions. The rest of the institutions are either Monthly Pay Order listed schools or fully private owned schools (Bangladesh Bureau of Education Information & Statistics [BANBEIS], 2015). In the year 2015 there were 9,743,072 students enrolled in primary schools, 9,540,102 students enrolled in secondary schools and 3,678,869 students enrolled at college level. In addition a large number of students were enrolled in the higher studies at various universities (BANBEIS, 2015). Providing facilities and maintaining such a large number of students is a daunting task in a developing country that, like Bangladesh, suffers from poverty, unemployment, lack of infrastructure and natural calamities.

Despite all these difficulties Bangladesh has managed to make progress in a number of significant ways. For example, due to the initiatives from government and other parties like NGOs, international donors and aid agencies, enrolment has reached 97.7% of the relevant population in primary schools (BANBEIS, 2015). Although there are some debates about the BANBEIS statistics, it is still a remarkable achievement for a developing country like Bangladesh. A previous 2008 Report of the World Bank had stated that many school-aged children either do not enrol in the school or leave school within a very short time of their enrolment.

Education is seen as the top priority for Bangladesh's improvement. In recent times many initiatives have been taken to uplift the quality and quantity of education. The most notable of these is the development of the Education Policy 2010. Since Independence in 1971 several education committees had been formed to develop education policy. Some of them failed to do so and some of them made policies which remained as paper document and were never implemented. The Education Policy 2010 is the first one to see some light of implementation.

The policy was developed with the aim to equip citizens to attain the necessary knowledge and skills so that they can work globally competing within the global

community. Education, according to this policy, is considered as the most important tool for overcoming the problems that the country is facing. To make this vision a reality a number of other initiatives were developed to uplift education: revising and modernising the curriculum in light of the education policy, introducing *creative questions* at secondary and higher secondary level, re-structuring the examination system, and developing new textbooks for various subjects.

New textbooks for primary and secondary levels were written following the revised education policy and curriculum with an aim to develop the country's citizen to become skilled human resources (MOE). It was also envisioned that the new curriculum and textbooks would encourage creative teaching and learning. The national examinations were revised and creative questions were included to encourage students to think and understand. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) provided textbooks that are free of cost and encouraged their use in class. At the same time the use of notebooks and guidebooks and memorisation of answers for examinations was discouraged. Education at primary and secondary level in Bangladesh is free and textbooks are provided free to primary and secondary level students. In the year 2017 about 360 million free textbooks are distributed among 40 million primary and secondary school children.

Stipends are given to students, especially to girls, to encourage them to continue their study. If a student fails in the examination he or she needs to study in the same class the following year. Students usually attend classes from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm and depending on the student's parents ability some of the students attend after school coaching or in the private tuition in the evening or before the start of the class. Students also study by themselves at night. Usually they learn the homework given by the school or by the coaching or private tuition.

In this education policy emphasis is given to teachers' training. Trained and qualified teachers are considered essential to bring desired changes. Teachers are being trained with an aim to improve the teaching quality. Some of the training courses are arranged out of government revenue and some are funded by various aid agencies.

In education policy technical and vocational education is prioritised with an aim to develop a skilled workforce. To enhance vocational and technical education teachers in

the vocational and technical centres are given training under projects like *Skill Development Projects* and *Skills and Training Enhancement Projects (STEP)* (World Bank, 2013).

## **ICT in Education**

Throughout the modern world the use of ICT in education is a significant issue. To keep pace with the modern world, various government and non-government organisations (such as UNESCO) are emphasising the integration of ICT in education. Scholars (Krees, 2003; Mills, 2010) have argued that integration of ICT in the curriculum has positive impact on language and literacy learning. There is a movement undertaken by the present government, called *Digital Bangladesh* that encourages use of technology in every sector in Bangladesh. Teachers are encouraged to use ICT in their teaching and ICT training courses are arranged to adapt teachers with the new technologies. A compulsory subject, called *ICT*, is included at secondary level and specialised ICT teachers are recruited for almost every school. Schools are provided with multimedia projectors and computers. The Bangladesh government has undertaken a nine-year project, *English in Action* (EIA) jointly funded by the Bangladesh government and the British government. This project is aiming to improve overall English skills for the teachers and students. EIA is trying to utilise ICT in English learning and is developing class activities using simple technological devices like mobile phones, portable audio technologies and multimedia projectors. Several studies (Shohel & Bank, 2010; Walsh, Shreshtha & Hedges, 2011) have reported the positive impact of ICT in English language teaching in Bangladesh. They claimed that the integration of ICT and the use of different technologies have contributed significantly in teachers' professional development. Having better English skills is one of the prerequisites of using these technologies as the primary operational language of these technologies is English.

It is envisioned that with the integration of ICT in education, students at different levels will be introduced to modern technologies. The registrations and publications of results of various national examinations including Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C), Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C), different universities' admissions test, and various job recruitment tests are carried out on-line. As a result access to information is hoped to

become easier. In line with education policy, items of ICT and multimedia equipment, like computers, projectors, laptops and internet modems, are already provided to many schools and colleges, and gradually the government aims to supply all schools and colleges. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate and share with other teachers, and to facilitate this collaboration a web portal, named *Teachers Portal*, has been developed so that teachers can share their multimedia teaching content, like powerpoint presentations, lesson plans and other resources. Education policy (2010) has discouraged the use of commercially produced examination notebooks and guidebooks and encouraged classroom learning. Examination, in the policy, is not considered as a threat, rather an opportunity to assess students' learning.

### **Shortage of skilled workers**

However, despite many notable initiatives, there are many factors that still need to be addressed. There is a mismatch between the skilled people required for the current job market and the education and training that learners in Bangladesh are receiving (Haider, 2015). There is an increased need of skilled people in different trade and skills sectors (such as fashion designers, plumbers, chefs, bricklayers, pipefitters, and motor mechanics) both in Bangladesh and worldwide. However in Bangladesh there is a lack of opportunities to train people in different vocational skills. One of the main reasons is the shortage of vocational training centres. Moreover, existing vocational training institutes are not providing the kind of courses that would enable students to acquire internationally and nationally required skills and competencies, and to not provide students with practical training opportunities (Asian Development Bank, 2016).

### **Test-driven education system**

The Bangladesh education system is said to be a test driven education system (Asian Development Bank, 2015). There are many examinations at various stages of education. Some of these examinations are administered by the different sectors of government and some by school authorities. Examinations are held half yearly and yearly in every class. The examinations that are held nationally are the Primary Education Completion

Examination (PECE) at the end of Class V, the Junior Certificate Examination (JSC) at the end of Class VIII, the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination at the end of Class X and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) at the end of Class XII<sup>2</sup>. Students who continue to study are required to take examinations for university admission, examinations throughout university study, and then examinations for different kinds of job recruitment. Selection for Bangladesh government services usually starts with a preliminary test in the form of multiple choice questions. Those who are successful in the preliminary test are asked to sit for a written test and the successful candidates in the written test are asked to go for a viva. However, it is difficult to say to what extent these examinations, especially at the high stake examinations at the secondary and higher secondary level, measure a student's learning. Furthermore as there is no standard or rubric for marking students' written scripts, it is difficult to see the examination results as the true reflections of students' ability. For example, a composition may get different marks depending on the teacher who is marking, and a memorised essay may get better marks than a student's own writing.

Politicisation of results is another problematic issue in Bangladesh. Usually the government wants more students to succeed in the examination to show the success of the government, and because of that there has been a dramatic rise of percentage of pass in the last few years. As mentioned early, there has been a dramatic increase in students achieving GPA 5, as a public university claims it has had to relax its admission criteria because students failed to pass the admission test.

Apart from the dominance of rote memorisation and recall of facts, there are extensive reports that the entire system of public examinations is fraught with mismanagement and cheating, which seriously compromises its integrity (Akter, 2017, Islam, 2016). Issues associated with the examination system are examined in Chapter Four.

### ***Urban and rural schools***

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<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh uses the term Class. Other countries use Grade or Year. The use of Roman numbers in this context is also common in Bangladesh.

Schools in the city areas in Bangladesh and specially secondary schools in the richer city areas enjoy many facilities. Usually these schools have well equipped classrooms, an auditorium, a library, a principal's room, rooms for the other teachers (sometimes separate rooms for the male and female teachers), playgrounds, sports facilities, and some schools even have hostel facilities. Students are usually seen with nice and tidy uniforms with beautiful shoes: their clothes indicate their socio- economic background. Schools sometimes provide lunch: sometimes they charge a fee and sometimes students bring lunch with them in a nice tiffin box and a water bottle. It is common to see a large number of parents, especially mothers, waiting outside the school while the children are inside. Sometimes they just drop their children in the morning and come back to take their children when school finishes. Students in those schools are comparatively active in academic studies and they also take part in different kinds of cultural and sports activities.

In some rural schools students wear a uniform, and in some schools there is no uniform: students usually wear whatever clothes they have. The common scenario is that school building has not been painted for a long time. The plaster in the wall is falling and with the absence of any maintenance work the paint on the walls has faded. Furniture in the classrooms is often in a decrepit condition. There are benches and tools for the students where students sit in rows in the class. For the teacher there is a table, a blackboard and a chair. In the morning school starts with an assembly where students sometimes do light physical exercises, recite from the holy Quran and sing the national anthem. The class starts with roll call in the first period to keep a record of students' attendance. Then the lesson starts and teachers teach from the textbooks or they follow a guidebook. In the village students usually come alone or with their friends. It is not a common practice for parents to bring their children or to take them home.

Teaching materials and the other language teaching facilities are not the same in every school. Some elite urban schools have modern facilities like computers, overhead projectors, audio and video facilities. On the other hand, there are some schools, especially in the rural areas, where there are very few facilities. Many schools do not even have an English teacher; teachers of other subjects are sometimes required to teach English in many rural schools due to the shortage of English teachers.

However, all the schools follow the National Curriculum and Textbooks Board's (NCTB) syllabus, as students will be required to sit the exams which are based on the NCTB syllabus. The differences between urban and rural school is examined in Chapter Seven.

### ***English in communication in Bangladesh***

In Bangladesh, English is used as the language of international communication. The use of English has increased significantly since 1990 due to the growth in international trades, garments industries, globalisation and satellite television (Imam, 2005). Banu & Sussex (2001) noted that due to the dependence on foreign aid for its development projects, Bangladesh needs to maintain regular correspondence in English with foreign offices. Many multinational companies (such as Samsung and Lever Brothers) are now operating regional offices in Bangladesh and many more giants like Google and Facebook are planning to open regional offices soon. Moreover, many international chain hotels, financial companies and international aid agencies are now operating in Bangladesh. These organisations use English in their official correspondence.

After the Private University Act was passed in 1992, 82 private universities have been established. All these universities use English as a medium of study except for very few subjects such as Bangla. Apart from private universities there are 40 public universities in Bangladesh and most of the universities offer the majority of their courses in English.

Bangladeshi students have keen interest in studying abroad. A foreign degree is valued highly in the country. Sometimes study in a developed country is followed by settlement in the country. Although there are no precise statistics about those who go abroad to study and then settle, it is believed the number is quite high (Anthias, 2008).

In the secondary and higher secondary level, although the prevalent medium of study is Bangla, there is an option to study in English following the same national curriculum. Some of the elite schools and cadet colleges offer English medium study following the same national curriculum.

### **English Curriculum at Secondary level**

For many years the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was the dominant method of teaching English at secondary and higher secondary levels in Bangladesh. Textbooks mainly consisted of literary texts. Grammar was considered very important and taught deductively. The medium of instruction was Bangla and translating between English and Bangla was practiced rigorously. Students were required to practise grammar exercises which were very important for the examination. Grammar rules were presented by the teacher, and memorised by students.

There were various exercises prescribed in the textbooks and teachers followed them rigorously in their teaching. Classes were mainly teacher- centred, with the teacher talking most of the time and students remaining silent unless they were asked by the teacher to answer a question. If students remained silent during the class, the class was considered as a success. The lesson was presented in a lecture method where students sat closely together and listened to what the teacher said. There was nothing like 'pair work' or 'group work' and as a result, students' communicative competence was not developed (Hasan, 2004).

Reading and writing were assessed in the examination. Questions were of a very similar type every year, and as a result, students could memorise possible answers important for the exam (Chowdhury, 2010).

### **English Curriculum reform**

The communicative approach to English language teaching was introduced in 1996 to improve language learning. A team of writers was trained in the United Kingdom in order to write textbooks suitable for Bangladeshi following the CLT approach. Under the supervision of foreign experts, they wrote textbooks for the secondary and higher secondary levels. These books were based on the principle of actually practising use of the language. The textbooks called for practice in the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, usually in an interactive mode (NCTB, 2012).



The curriculum policy was further revised in 2010, emphasising communicative use of English. The English Curriculum puts much emphasis on using English in real life situations.

The objectives of the new English Curriculum for secondary level as stated in National English Curriculum (2012. P. 74) are:

1. To acquire competence in all four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2. To use the competence for effective communication in real life situations at pre-intermediate level.
3. To acquire necessary grammar competence in the English language.
4. To develop creativity and critical thinking through the English language.
5. To become independent learners of English by using reference skills.
6. To use language skills for utilising information technology.
7. To use literary pieces in English for enjoyment and language learning.
8. To be skilled human resources by using English language skills.

However, although the textbooks are written following a communicative approach to language teaching, still there is no provision for assessing students' speaking and listening skills in the national examinations. There is policy provision for students' speaking and listening skills to be measured through continuous assessment which is to carry 10% of the total marks allocated for the English exam (The National Curriculum, 2012). This process is not yet implemented. As a result, listening and speaking skills are viewed as less important both by teachers and students.

### **Teaching loads**

During my data collection I have talked to many teachers and I found that secondary school teachers in Bangladesh generally work from 9 am till 4.30 pm if the school runs one shift. However, some schools, especially some famous schools in the city area have double shifts. The morning shift usually runs from 7 am to 12 am and the day shift from 12.30 pm to 5.30 pm. If the school has two shifts a teacher generally teaches in one shift. Among the teachers I talked with during my data collection almost all mentioned that

they taught at least twenty-five to thirty lessons of forty-five minutes each in a week. On top of that, some of the teachers informed me that they had frequent administrative tasks. Some needed to teach other subjects than English because of the shortage of teachers. Some indicated their dissatisfaction with excessive teaching loads and because of that, they asserted, they did not have scope to prepare innovative and interesting teaching resources and classroom activities. However, almost all admitted that they taught private students at their home or in tuition centres. They would decorate one of their rooms like a classroom and furnished it with a table, a chair or a bench, a blackboard or a whiteboard.

### **Private tuition**

From the point of view of improving schools, private tutoring in Bangladesh is considered as a bad practice. Successive education commissions have criticised this practice and recommended it be stopped. A circular issued by the Ministry of Education asked teachers to refrain from this practice. However, in a study conducted in secondary schools Hamid, Sussex and Khan (2009) found positive co-relation between attending private tuition and students' SSC results. They also reported secondary students' positive attitude towards attending private tuition, irrespective of gender or social class. They further reported that students prefer attending private tuition over mainstream schooling. Despite the government's indictment of private tutoring, a majority of teachers involve themselves in private tutoring. One of the teachers I interviewed explained the reason of his involvement. He has been working as an assistant teacher in different government high school in Bangladesh for the last five years and is now working in one of the government Girls High Schools in a district town. Although it was not one of the mega-cities, still he had to pay 12,000 Tk (USD 150) as house rent for his two bedroom house, of which one room was furnished with a bench, table and blackboard so that he could teach students at home. He reported he gets a salary of 16,000 Tk (USD 200) per month, and said that, since he was the only earner in the family, he could not manage to support his wife and two school-aged daughters unless he earns an extra 4,000 Tk (USD 50). On top of his immediate family obligations he helped his parents who live in the village. He admitted that he teaches students in the morning and in the evening as much as he can. I only got a

chance to talk to him on a Friday at around 4.00 pm (which is a school holiday) and even though my visit was scheduled a week ago I had to wait on that day for him to finish coaching before I could talk to him.

### **Foreign dependency**

Another striking feature of Bangladesh education is the influence of foreign aid and loans in different forms. Bangladesh is a regular recipient of donations and loans from the United Nations, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, United States Agency For International Development (USAID), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom and from other developed nations and organisations. With the help of these foreign donations and loans many initiatives have been taken and several projects like the Teaching Quality Improvement (TQI) project, Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP) have been set up. English projects such as English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP), and English In Action (EIA) have been partially funded by DFID. These donations and loans often come with many terms and conditions, and there is need for critical examination of the extent to which Bangladesh benefits from such aid. Their impact is further examined in Chapter Eight.

### **Research that addresses English teaching in the Bangladeshi context**

In the chapters that follow I report relevant research as it aligns with the issues that I discuss. Here I offer a review of research that addresses English language teaching in Bangladesh and identify the gap in the existing research that I seek to fill.

In the field of English language teaching in Bangladesh research has mainly focused on shortcomings and problems and might be considered to fall under the label of *deficit theorising* (Bishop et. al., 2003). A deficit theory of education compares students to a supposed norm and argues that the focus should be on remedying the deficits. The majority of the research studies of English language teaching in Bangladesh, of which there is a growing body, have focused on problems involved. The problems investigated

as sometimes specific to English language teaching and learning and sometimes generalised with the education process as a whole.

Nath (2005) stated that lack of resources, lack of management capacity and lack of commitment stand as a barrier against quality primary education in Bangladesh. Nath (2008) concluded that due to the inadequate expenditure on education it is not often possible to provide quality primary education for all children and as a result parents seek supplementary private tutoring for their children. He also stated that Bangladeshi primary teachers' salary is the lowest among other South Asian nations. So Bangladesh primary teachers see private tutoring as an additional source of income in order to lead a decent life.

Sommers (2011) concluded that although the enrolment rate in the primary schools had increased as a result of various initiatives, poor and underprivileged rural children were still not attending school or were dropping out before completing primary school. She reported that absenteeism, low quality of teaching in the government primary school and lack of professionalism were prevalent in the rural areas in Bangladesh.

Hamid and Honan (2012) found that in the primary classroom in Bangladesh teachers provided information through lectures and if students responded then it was usually assumed that students were learning. They noted that the learner-centred teaching that is advocated in communicative language teaching was absent in the classrooms they studied. Salahuddin, Khan and Rahman (2013) reported that English appeared to be a terrifying subject to the rural students of Bangladesh. He noted that rural primary schools usually did not have modern facilities and teachers received inadequate training and little support within the school.

In relation to English language teaching, similar problems were reported in several studies of secondary and higher secondary levels in Bangladesh. For example, Hasan (2013) reported a range of barriers that stand against implementing communicative language teaching in secondary classrooms. These included lack of training for the teachers, teachers' low level of proficiency in English, a mismatch between curriculum and national examinations, teachers' lack of familiarity with interactive classroom activities, grammar teaching in isolation, large classes and short lesson periods. Farooqui (2010) studied the introduction of communicative based textbooks and teachers' guides

written following the communicative curriculum at the secondary level. These textbooks were first introduced by the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP). In her study Farooqui concluded that although teachers in general believed that textbooks were good they were not in favour of using those in their classroom in the way prescribed in the corresponding teachers' guide. She attributed various factors to this outcome, including short class duration, large class sizes, seating arrangement in the class, examination pressure and students' low proficiency in English. She added that the teachers participating in her study believed that if they did the activities suggested in the textbooks, then students would not be able to pass in the examination. So teachers focused on what would be important for the national examination.

Farooqui (2014) stated that while the newly introduced communicative English curriculum at the secondary level in Bangladesh emphasised using English as the medium of classroom instruction in the English class, the curriculum policy was not practised in the classroom. She attributed this outcome to teachers' lack of academic background and teachers' and students' low proficiency in English.

Islam (2015) studied implementation of communicative language teaching in the city and rural areas in Bangladesh. He concluded that a clear disparity existed among city and rural schools' implementation of the communicative language teaching approach. The high performing city school implemented communicative language teaching more efficiently than rural schools. Thus his study questioned the appropriateness of existing policy. Similarly Choudhury (2010) explored Bangladeshi rural English teachers' perspectives of the CLT based curriculum using in depth individual and focus group interviews and classroom observations. Her findings highlighted a mismatch between the curriculum learning goals and actual practices of teaching English in rural areas. She emphasised the disparities that arose between interpretations of the CLT approach by secondary English teachers in urban English speaking communities and in rural areas. This study also noted the practice of narrowing down the syllabus for the sake of teaching what would be in the examinations.

Hasan (2004) studied the introduction and implementation of the communicative syllabus in the secondary level. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, his study examined different stages and components of the existing curriculum and the

shortcomings of developing and implementing the new curriculum. He reported gaps and mismatches between policy and actual practices in English language teaching at the secondary level in Bangladesh. He further argued that the curriculum intention was not clear to most of the teachers and the curriculum intention was not being reflected in teachers' practice. Thus students were failing to acquire satisfactory levels of proficiency.

Researchers investigated English teaching from different perspectives. For example, Hamid (2009) examined Bangladeshi rural English learners' academic achievement from a sociological perspective. He used different instruments like surveys, interviews and class observations and collected data from 228 rural Bangladeshi students and their parents, English teachers and head teachers. This study linked students' English language learning with the students' social and economic background and argued that the ELT policy and the introduction of CLT in Bangladesh failed to bring desirable changes due to a lack of proper implementation practices. It also examined different factors associated with English language learning in rural Bangladeshi students.

Several research studies highlighted the impact of examinations on teaching and learning. Maniruzzaman and Hoque (2010) and Choudhury (2010) found that teachers felt pressure to teach according to the test, as high stake test results were very important for a student's subsequent higher studies and job opportunities. Because of test driven teaching, in the case of English, speaking and listening were not considered very significant as they were not tested in the final exam. In most cases teachers were concerned with reading and writing and to complete the syllabus necessary for the terminal examination. The current assessment system was found to drive students to memorise necessary answers. Podder (2011) investigated the assessment policy and practices and found that there is no provision of assessing speaking and listening in the secondary English curriculum although there is a direction in the curriculum to practice and assess those skills in the class. He further added that teachers were not trained to assess students' listening and speaking skills. His study recommended a reform of the curriculum so that enables assessment of students' speaking and listening skills.

Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman and Khan (2014) pointed out that even though the question format of different examination at secondary level has been revised since the

introduction of the CLT based curriculum, a significant gap still existed between what was intended to be taught and what was tested in the exam.

Hamid (2010) found that even though there were some opportunities for in-service teachers' professional training, enough teachers were not getting opportunities for training. Studies by Ainy (2001), Rahman, Kabir and Afroze (2006) and Mazumder (2013) variously found that there were incongruities between the existing teachers' training programmes and the skills required for teaching in secondary schools in Bangladesh. They further noted that most of teachers started their teaching career without having any professional training about teaching.

Research by the English in Action project (EIA, 2009a) found that although some urban schools were equipped with computers, projectors and internet, most of the schools in rural areas and in small cities lacked these facilities. Moreover, many teachers were not familiar with these facilities or feel comfortable using them in their teaching. Thus teachers preferred giving lectures to using various communicative activities. English classes were dominated by teachers and students were given little chance to talk. The use of spoken English both by teachers and students was very minimal.

There is a lack of research that focuses on innovative practices or possible solutions while acknowledging the contextual problems involved in English language teaching. However, the studies of Alam (2016) and Salahuddin (2016) are two examples of research that focused on innovative practices in a Bangladeshi context although not specifically in the field of English language teaching. Alam (2016) studied a rural school in Bangladesh where teachers in that school critically and collaboratively reflected on their own and their colleagues' practices. The teachers in his study successively re-examined their purpose in teaching and based on their reflections they set further goals. Salahuddin's (2016) study, on the other hand, explored a principal's innovative practice in a secondary school in Bangladesh. His study detailed aspects of a principal's creative and innovative leadership practices to engage teachers, students, and communities and to maximise students' learning within the existing curriculum.

Rasheed (in preparation) reported an innovative project that focused on English teaching in Bangladesh. He described his project in a rural school setting, where he trialled a set of interactive English teaching resources that he had developed based on the government

provided textbooks. The resources were first trialled with teachers in a workshop and then in classroom teaching. Rasheed argued that despite numerous contextual barriers there is scope to teach English in an interactive and meaningful way and that it is not necessary to look for models from outside for teaching English in Bangladesh but rather a model for teaching English could be developed locally.

The loan and aid based educational development projects that have shaped English language teaching in Bangladesh have also produced research reports. For example, EIA has conducted several baseline studies to gather data for an overview of the communicative environment in Bangladesh (Kirkwood & Ray, 2011). The areas that EIA's baseline studies focused on were the English language proficiencies of teachers and students of primary and secondary levels (EIA, 2009a), socio-linguistic factors (EIA, 2009b), teachers' pedagogical practices (EIA, 2009d), existing teaching materials and English language training (EIA, 2009e), teacher training (EIA, 2009f) and using technology in teaching (EIA, 2009g). These studies mainly reported existing shortcomings and difficulties associated with English language teaching at the primary and secondary levels in Bangladesh. These included lack of opportunities for learners to expose themselves in English environment and limited opportunities to communicate with foreigners in English. Other findings from these studies indicated that, despite progressing from one class to another, students made very little progress in their oral proficiency, that there was an inadequate provision of teacher training, and that students usually had poor oral English although it was a skill that was really needed for their professional life. However, the consultants in these projects also produced research that highlighted the success of their projects. For example, English in Action has a separate section in their website called 'success stories'. Shohel Maruf and Bank (2010) reported the pre-pilot intervention of the English In Action projects as very successful:

The pre-pilot EIA intervention in UCEP schools a very fruitful initiative 'to secure a professionally trained, well supported and highly motivated teacher workforce' in Bangladesh (p. 13).

The English in Action Project developed a professional development programme based on mobile phones that they called *Trainers in your Pocket*. Walsh et. al. (2013) reported that feedback from a large number of teachers who were using mobile phone in their



teaching were impressive. Shresta (2013) reported that at the beginning of the EIA's baseline survey they found that teachers used Bangla in the English class, that students memorised content, and reading and writing practices in class were teacher-centred. However, Shresta reported that, because of the EIA's initiatives, teachers used more communicative activities in English classes, that EIA trained teachers used games, songs, posters, flashcards, audio devices, various kinds of pair work and group work in class.

Khan (2001) stated that the English Language Teaching Improvement project (ELTIP) was an innovative program that worked to develop English teachers professionally. She found that it was innovative as it introduced communicative language teaching and communicative principle based textbooks *English For Today*. Hunter (2000) also stated that ELTIP was a successful project and because of the effectiveness of the project the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh agreed to adopt its model for future English teacher training programmes.

However these research reports are from authors who were involved in the projects in various capacities. It would be interesting to see some independent evaluation of those projects, and see the extent to which they agreed, or disagreed with the findings. Such independent evaluation seems necessary because of criticisms of donor funded projects. For example, Hamid (2010) expressed concerns about the effectiveness of donor funded ELT projects. He stated that they were a waste of national resources and the outcomes were negligible. Hamid (2010) noted that the ELTIP and EIA projects have the same source of funding, and he questioned the rationale behind starting a new project with new baseline surveys and new recruitment of trainers instead of continuing with the previous one if the previous one was indeed considered as a successful project.

### **A gap in the research**

The government of Bangladesh has taken many measures to improve the teaching and learning of English. These measures include teacher training, providing support to implement a communicative approach to language teaching at the secondary and higher secondary levels, introducing new curricula and textbooks at different levels. A well informed, qualified and progressive teaching force is considered as central to bring about

the desired changes. Despite many initiatives and different large scale projects, it is generally accepted that little has changed in teaching and learning English since the adoption of CLT (Chowdhury & Ha, 2008; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008), and to some extent the standard of teaching English has deteriorated.

Although various research studies have identified a range of barriers associated with English language teaching in Bangladesh, not much emphasis has been given to in-depth exploration of these barriers or of the contextual factors that create them. The factors identified by existing research and the arguments about the effectiveness of imported consultants and development programmes suggest that the complexities involved in English language teaching at the secondary level in Bangladesh cannot be attributed to any single phenomenon; rather multiple factors and influences shape English language teaching and these factors and influences may well be interrelated in many ways. By charting some of these complexities and the challenges and opportunities they create, this study set to fill a significant gap in existing research about English language teaching at the secondary level in Bangladesh.

### **Organisation of the following chapters**

This chapter has opened up a discussion about the context of English language teaching in Bangladesh and has suggested some of the complexities involved in making such teaching effective. It has offered an introductory description of the social, economic and educational context. It has explained my reasons for working with an emergent research approach. It has also reviewed key works in published research which address English teaching in Bangladesh. Further examination of relevant literature will take place in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Two explains the methodological choices I made in carrying out this study. It identifies a qualitative approach using case study and it describes the way I have worked with an emergent design. It describes my participants and sites and the ways I have approached analysis of my data and presentation of my findings.

Chapter Three reports a survey of Bangladeshi secondary school teachers' beliefs about the curriculum and effective teaching and their reported practices. It identifies a clear gap

between teachers' theoretical understandings and what they feel free to practice. This gap has prompted my intention to examine the complexities that impact on practice.

The impact of the examination system is explored in Chapter Four. The chapter reviews the operations of the examination system and the ways it dominates education. It also reports teachers', students' and parents' positions in regard to examinations.

Chapter Five reports teachers' initiatives to practice CLT in their classes. It also explores the importance of communicative uses of English for business, education, social status and entry into other countries. It reports a number of participants' stories of why English is important to them and discusses the difficulties encountered in developing a communicative approach to English teaching.

Chapter Six examines the various ways in which English teachers are trained and the institutions and projects that provide the training. A number of gaps and problems are identified.

An urban rural divide is identified and described in Chapter Seven. This divide is also one of wealth and so the limited educational opportunities of students in urban slums are also examined.

International influences are examined in Chapter Eight. The legacies of colonialism and the pressures of neo-colonialism are explored. Also examined is the impact of English as a global lingua franca and the role and influence of international providers of loans and aid.

The concluding chapter pulls together the issues discussed in previous chapters. It returns to the image of a river that needs to be charted and navigated and suggests implications of the study for teachers, teacher trainers and policy makers, and researchers.

## Chapter Two: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the methodology of this research project. In broad terms the methodological approach is an emergent one. The project seeks to understand the forces that shape English language teaching in Bangladeshi secondary schools and how teachers approach their work within this context. The central questions that guide this research are-

1. *What shapes English language teaching in Bangladesh?*
2. *How do the English teachers in Bangladesh secondary schools navigate the complex terrain of English language teaching?*

As I began to investigate teachers' practices and the context they worked in, I became increasingly aware of the complexities. I found I needed to continuously extend my frames of inquiry to accommodate this complexity. Later in this chapter I further discuss the concept of emergent research and the way other researchers and theorists have described it.

This chapter provides a description of the evolution of my methodological choices and of the reasons for them. It details the processes of data collection, the engagement with participants, the analytical lenses used and the processes of analysis and the choices made in presentation of my findings. It also describes how questions of credibility have been addressed and how the ethical issues in the research are taken into account.

Initially I planned my research in two phases. The first phase was to be a survey of a wide selection of English teachers' beliefs and practices in order to establish a foundation for further investigating the practice of teachers who were identified by their colleagues and students as effective. The second phase was to involve interviews with a selected group of teachers and observation of their practice. I undertook a pilot study that included a trial of my survey and interviews with two teachers nominated by a teachers training college educator who I respected. The pilot study alerted me to complexities in the field of English language teaching in Bangladesh that I had not initially understood. My design,

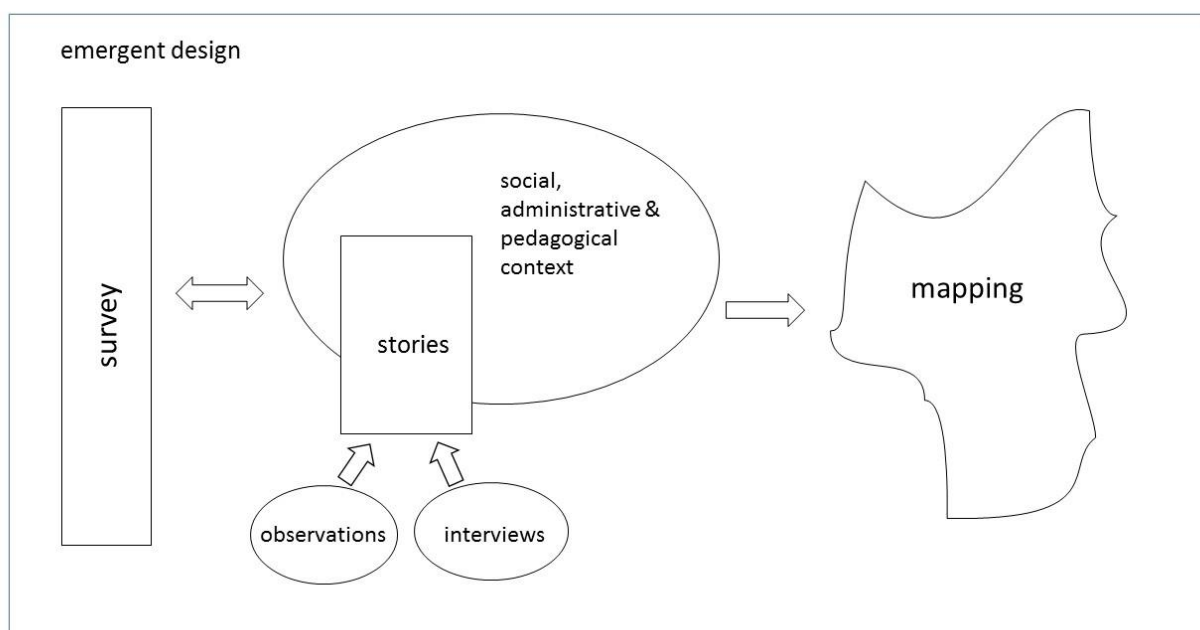
therefore, expanded to investigate the social, administrative and pedagogical complexities that were becoming apparent.

After adjustments that were needed as a result of the pilot study I carried out the survey of English teachers. The survey explored the beliefs of practicing secondary English teachers about effective teaching and the way they reported their practices. It also explored perceived barriers to effective teaching in Bangladesh. Analysis of the survey indicated a number of areas where there were contradictions between respondents' claimed understandings and their practices. These indicated areas for further investigation.

I then proceeded to interview teachers, and again because of issues that arose through the interviews I expanded my interview scope to include teacher trainers, principals, parents and other related professionals. Much of the data I collected seemed to fall naturally into people's individual stories and so I eventually decided to retain the narrative flow of these stories in the presentation of my findings.

As I further explored education policy and the social, administrative and pedagogical context that underpinned participants' experiences I began to develop a tentative mapping of the terrain of the complexities involved in English teaching in Bangladesh.

A simple model of the process involved in my emergent design is offered in the figure below.



**Figure 2.2: An overview of my research design**

### **Emergent design**

Rather than being an initial plan, it was the need to explore the complexities of the context in which English language teaching in Bangladesh that led me to consider my research design in terms of emergence. I then looked for antecedents. Robson (2011) describes an emergent methodology as a flexible design where the detailed framework of the study emerges during the study.

As I worked through my initial plan of conducting a survey and interviewing teachers and students, not only did I become aware of the complexities but also I began to realise that there was need to map those complexities in some way in order to recognise the range of pressures and influence within which curriculum imperatives were formulated and within which teachers had to find their way. Mapping complexities became a major goal of the project. Although I retained a sense of the overall aim of the project I did not try to control the content of what participants chose to talk about, and I constantly sought to let

the data shape the search for further material. Robson (2011) stated that emerging design is suitable in a context when the researcher seeks to explore a complex phenomenon in a relatively open, 'poorly controlled' and 'messy' setting. This was the case in this study: the phenomenon of English teaching in Bangladesh is complex and there are multiple stakeholders, forces and agenda that influence English teaching. There is also a lack of precedents in mapping the territory which means that I could not find clear authoritative patterns for my design.

I drew on Denzin and Lincoln's construction of the researcher as *bricoleur* (2005). Denzin and Lincoln point out that the search for informative material and interpretative processes is not necessarily made in advance. Rather, the interpretative bricoleur "produces a pieced-together set of representations that is fitted to the specifics of a complex situation" (p. 4). Accordingly I have pieced together the survey, interviews in which teachers, students and other stakeholders discuss their experiences, investigation of the dominance of the examination system, the intentions of the mandated CLT approach, the training that is available, the differences between rural and urban contexts, and the impact of colonialisms and other international influences.

### **A case study**

Because this research examines a teaching process in the context of one country, I have conceptualised it as a case study. The case in this instance is English language teaching at the secondary level in Bangladesh. I utilise the concept of case study as it allows me to position this work within the discussion of case study offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Stake (1995), Patton (2015), Creswell (2013), Bassey (1999) and Merriam (1998). Case study, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is "an intensive or complete examination of a facet, an issue, or perhaps the events of a geographic setting over time. . . a case is a snapshot of reality, a slice of life, or an episode" (p. 214). Stake (1995) defines case study as "the study of particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. XI). Creswell (2013) describes case study research as "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information

(such as observations, interviews, audio visual materials, documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes” (p. 97).

I find this approach useful as it is not the intention of the study to evaluate English language teaching or teachers or to compare or contrast English language teaching in Bangladesh with that in other countries. Nor have I set out to justify a theory, or do I attempt to create possible solutions for the various problems. Rather this study aims to explore the phenomena of complexities involved in English language teaching at the secondary and higher secondary levels in Bangladesh providing a holistic picture with rich descriptions.

Case studies invite the complexity of exploring human perceptions, thoughts, interactions and decision making processes in a real world context (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012). Merriam (1998) stressed the importance of a ‘rich thick description of the phenomenon,’ (p. 29) and ‘illumination’ (p. 30) of the phenomenon, such as interpreting from different perspectives. Bassey (1999) argued for the need for researchers to collect sufficient data to not only explore significant features of the cases and create plausible interpretations of what is found, but to also be able to construct a worthwhile argument or story and to provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments.

Stake (1995) distinguished between intrinsic and instrumental case studies. The overarching case study of this research is primarily intrinsic as it focuses on a particular country, and within the large case each of the embedded cases speaks of only localised experience.

I am undertaking a mapping of one specific country’s context. Perhaps this case will have implications for other aspects of learning and teaching within Bangladesh. And perhaps other countries may have similar dilemma or complexities, and other researchers may find something useful in this research for their contexts. In this way, it may in time become a case study that could be used extrinsically. Stake (1995) also categorises some studies as involving multiple cases. This study could be categorised as a multiple-case study as each of the several teachers, students, teacher trainers and other professionals can be considered in terms of a separate case. However, it is the composite picture that these individual embedded cases present that is the focus of this study.



### **An interpretative qualitative approach**

The methodological approach is a predominantly qualitative one, with the inclusion of a quantitative survey. I intended to explore a *naturalistic phenomenon* in real life context with an aim to present a holistic picture of the phenomena without intending to influence or change anything (Patton, 2015). Tullis Owen (2008) argued that, in naturalistic inquiry, context is paramount to understand human behaviour and it is difficult to understand human experience outside its natural setting. In naturalistic inquiry, Tullis Owen emphasised the importance of conducting research in participants' natural setting and to collect data while participants are engaged in their daily practices. Greenwood (2016, p. 5) emphasised the importance of carefully considering a context in order to highlight the situatedness of knowledge and enable researchers from developing countries to "address their local context without being compelled to look through western eyes". Patton (2015) stated that

Qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real world settings and researcher does not attempt to affect, control, or manipulate what is unfolding naturally. Observations take place in real world setting, and people are interviewed with open-ended questions in place and under conditions that are comfortable for and familiar to them (p. 48).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated similarly that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to them (p. 3). Creswell (2013) argued that good qualitative research requires not only rigorous data collection and explicable analysis but also writing the research in a persuasive way so that the readers are engaged.

The central focus of this study is to understand what shapes English language teaching in Bangladesh and to map the complex terrain of the influences. It explores participants' everyday practices and seeks to capture their thoughts, philosophies and what influences their decision making. The qualitative paradigm allowed me to investigate in the participants' natural settings. I visited schools, private tuition centres, and teacher training sessions. I interviewed and observed teachers' teaching practices. I also explored

classes in the private tuition centres. I examined a range of artefacts, such as lesson plans, learning and teaching materials, exam questions, and I took photographs. While I examined these I took into consideration the relevant context in order to make sense of why participants did things. For example, I found that a particular head teacher asked other teachers to shorten the class time from that allocated as students did not come for classes after the lunch break. By shortening the class time teachers who are supposed to teach after the lunch also get chance to teach before lunch. I learned that students in his institution are from a poor family background and they usually help their family in the afternoon. So most of them could not come after the lunch to attend classes. By spending time in the school I was able to better understand the need for the principal's compromises with governmental expectations and the potential usefulness of his decision.

Data collection took place over a nine-month period and was gathered from different sources including teachers, teacher trainers, students, and policy and other documents. I actively sought to collect arguments from different perspectives. To ensure rigour different types of data were aligned to see where they supported each other and where they diverged. Narratives were developed from the data, and became the prompt for wider contextual investigation.

I have taken maximum caution not to interrupt teachers' and learners' everyday activities while collecting data. Interviews were taken at the participants' convenient time and only if they wanted to participate voluntarily. Similarly, when I observed classes, I sat at the back of the class and remained silent throughout the class.

For this study an interview protocol for the interviews with the teachers and teacher trainers was devised as a rough guide only. I tried to make the interview spontaneous and let the participants share their own stories. I asked subsequent questions when I felt that I needed further information or needed to dig deeper into any issue. Creswell (2012) noted that "Qualitative approaches use more open-ended approaches in which the inquirer ask general questions of participants, and the participants shape the response possibilities" (p. 19).

## **Investigating the Bangladesh context**

As the investigation progressed it became apparent that the phenomenon of English language teaching at the secondary level in Bangladesh is influenced by multiple factors. It became important to investigate those factors. For example, the gulf between urban and rural schools in Bangladesh is considerable and may be completely different from other countries, such as New Zealand where I was studying. Similarly, the examination culture and the importance attached to the examination results in Bangladesh may be incomparable to other contexts and is probably very difficult to understand from outside. Following Creswell's (2013) suggestions for the data collection through multiple sources I therefore collected data that would allow me to examine the nature and the impact of the factors that shaped the intentions and processes of English language teaching. For example, previous examination question papers helped me to understand the question pattern of the national examination and the recurring nature of the question topics. Since the complex influences, the barriers and enablers in English language teaching in Bangladesh are still relatively unexplored and unpublished, I turned not only to exiting literature but also to official documents and engaged in further interviews in order to gain accounts of personal experiences, expectations, problems and achievements.

## **Ethical considerations**

Once I decided the focus of my study, including the participants and instruments, I applied for the ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Human Ethics committee. I also presented the information sheet, consent form and the instruments I developed for my research. After considering my application, the Human Ethics Committee approved my project. I collected data for the pilot study once the project has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee.

All the participants in the study were treated according to the ethical guidelines of the University of Canterbury. Although there was no apparent risk in participating in this study, the following issues were taken into account while conducting the research and also will be observed in any future dissemination of the research.

First, participants' anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. The use of pseudonyms for the participants and schools ensures participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

Second, prior to conducting any surveys, interviews or class observations, the aim of the research was fully explained to all participants orally and an information sheet was provided to the participants. Data were collected once they gave their full consent to take part in the study. They were also informed that their participation in the study were voluntary, and no incentives would be offered for participation. They were assured of the full right to withdraw themselves at any time from the research, if they wished to do so. They were informed that information gained would be used for my thesis and for subsequent publications from the study.

Third, maximum care had been taken to ensure that participants were not uncomfortable to share their personal information and experiences, and participating in the study did not hamper their day to day life or teaching.

The information they provided has been stored securely.

Caution was taken to ensure that participants' moral and cultural values are respected and they are not offended by participating in this research.

### **Pilot Case study**

Yin (2014) identified numerous benefits of conducting a pilot case study. He stated that a pilot case study could help to develop and refine interview protocol, and even provide some conceptual clarification for the research design. A pilot case study, he said, is likely to come across most of the issues that would arise in the actual study. Yin (2014) argued that pilot study could be used to explore and further identify the issues that need investigation.

I carried out a pilot study before my actual case study. I will discuss the part of my pilot study that dealt with the refinement of my survey tool in the section of this chapter where I describe the quantitative survey. Here I will briefly comment on my piloting of my qualitative procedures.

My pilot study was towards the end of academic year in Bangladesh. There were several examinations like the JSC (Junior School Certificate) examination at that time so there were no classes that I could observe. Teachers were very busy with examination duties, marking examination scripts, filling the registration forms for the upcoming SSC examination and other administrative duties in the school.

Both teachers who took part in interviews in the pilot study were nominated. However, for selecting participants for the pilot study, the priority was on their availability and their willingness to participate in the study. While I was discussing my project and possible participants for the study with some teachers, they nominated the first teacher. He was a very busy person, but after contacting him over the phone, I managed to explain the aim of my research, and asked him whether he would agree to participate in the research. I also gave him the information sheet where I explained the aim of the research, his role if he participated, how the data would be stored and used for the research and the consent form. I also informed him verbally, that the participation in this research was completely voluntary and he had the right to withdraw at any time of the research. After reading the information sheet, he agreed to participate and signed the consent form. However, he mentioned that as that was the time for year-end examinations in the school, he had a very busy schedule.

The three month-long pilot study was significant in many ways. Based on the pilot study I became aware that I needed to address the following issues for the data collection of my study.

- The participating teachers need to have freedom to participate in their convenient time to ensure that participating in the research does not hamper teachers' day to day activities.
- I need to ensure that I am focusing on the purpose of my study and that I am asking enough questions so I can get the information. At the same time, I need to make sure I am not repeating the same question at a different time during the interview process.
- I need to ask relevant supplementary questions to clarify, if I think it is necessary.

- I found I was probably maintaining too high a level of formality. Looking back, the first interview seemed quite mechanical. I considered I failed to elicit what I wanted to know. So I adjusted my interview techniques to make it more engaging.

### **Quantitative phase: the survey**

I planned to begin my study with a survey of practicing teachers' understandings of their role as teachers of English language, their perceptions of enablers and problems and their reports of their actual practice.

The research questions that led to the design of the questionnaire were:

- What are the secondary English teachers' perceptions of the backgrounds, characteristics, beliefs and classroom practices of effective English teachers at the secondary level in Bangladesh?
- Are there any significant differences between participant teachers' perception of the effective English teachers' characteristics and participant teachers' classroom practices?
- What are the barriers to effective English teaching in Bangladesh?

### **Survey participants**

All the participants of the survey were teaching within the secondary schools when they took part in the survey. Participants were selected from both non-government and government high school. A majority of participants were attending 28 days in-service training in their various neighbouring teacher training colleges. The participants of this study were 216 secondary school English teachers from different regions of Bangladesh. (146 male and 66 female). In Bangladesh context it is comparatively difficult for the female teachers to come to the city and arrange short term accommodation to attend training courses. This could be one of the reasons for the lower number of female participants than male participants, despite the fact that I collected data from one teacher training college that is only for women. The participants had varied lengths of teaching experience (less than a year to more than 10 years). The survey was consecutively administered over the six months period and data were collected from different parts of Bangladesh. The majority of the respondents were 26- 35 years old (57.5%, N=123)

followed by (25.7%, N= 55) respondent age between 36- 45. Only 6.1% respondents were under 25 years of age.

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire I designed for this study consisted of 66 (Sixty-six) items which were divided into the following sub categories.

**Table 2.3: Themes of the questionnaire**

Category	Item number in the first part	Item number in the second part
General criteria for Effective English teacher	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	
Understanding of the Curriculum	7	33, 34
Language of Instruction/ Classroom language	8, 9, 10, 11	35
Teaching to the test	12, 13, 14	48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58
Teaching aid and materials used in the class	15, 16, 17, 18	38, 43,
preferred teaching methods and activities	19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 31, 32	36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64
Views on grammar teaching	24, 25, 26	44, 45
Feedback & correcting students error	27, 28, 29, 30	46, 47

## Measures: Questionnaire

The questionnaire for this survey was divided into two parts. Participants were asked to give their opinion using a Likert scale, where a scale of five (strongly agree, agree, no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree) was used. For the analysis using SPSS, data were first entered into an excel spread sheet. For the analysis the value that was used for different responses was:

**Table 4.2 Scale used in the questionnaire**

Strongly agree	Agree	No comments	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

The first part of the questionnaire was about teachers' beliefs about the characteristics of an effective teacher in the Bangladesh secondary school context. The second part of the questionnaire focused on participating teachers' own teaching practices. Items were chosen in this part with an aim to see what the respondents understood to be the qualities and practices of an effective English teacher, and to what extent they reflected those strategies in their own teaching practices. There were some questions related to the Bangladeshi context and to effective language teaching strategies (Brosh, 1996) in Bangladeshi secondary school's context, teachers' views on the national examination and how they negotiated between 'teaching to the test' and teaching various language skills.

Items were developed following the studies of Brosh (1996), Bell (2005), Brown (2009), Park and Lee (2006) and Kelly (2007). The questionnaire contained some demographic questions that were added at the end of the questionnaire. The first demographic question was about participants' gender, the second one was age, third and fourth questions were respectively about the highest qualification and years of teaching experience.

For reliability and validity, the questionnaire, after I developed it, was reviewed by several experts in designing such instruments and based on their recommendations, the questionnaire was modified. Then the questionnaire was piloted before the actual survey. Based on the pilot study and feedback received from the participants of the pilot study, the questionnaire was modified again to make it readily understood by the intended audience and to improve the clarity of some originally ambiguous questions. Data gathered through the questionnaire was put into an excel spread sheet for analysis. It was sorted and analysed using descriptive statistics.

The first version of the questionnaire was initially piloted with six Bangladesh PhD students at the University of Canterbury, where I am also pursuing my PhD. Although not all the participants were English teachers, they all had considerable knowledge about the Bangladesh education system and most of them were teachers of highly ranked universities or colleges of Bangladesh. They were asked to give their feedback regarding the contents, clarity, formatting and wording of the questionnaire. Participants were also asked to keep a record of the time required to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire



was also piloted with some other international PhD students of the College of Education of the University of Canterbury. Based on the feedback I received from all the PhD students, I modified the questionnaire and deleted some of the items. Items that were identified as duplicated, vague, or received 100% of the same kind of responses were either deleted or modified.

The questionnaire was then piloted with thirty-nine Bangladesh secondary school English teachers in Bangladesh, during the same three months as I piloted my qualitative interviews. Convenience sampling was used to select participants for the pilot study. However, only those who were current English teachers in Bangladesh secondary school were asked to participate in the study. The participant teachers were selected from different regions of Bangladesh, in order to obtain a holistic picture representing teachers from different parts of the country. Data were collected from Dhaka, Pabna, Maymensingh, Comilla and Chittagong regions. Where necessary appropriate permission was taken from the relevant authority before approaching teachers to ask them to participate in the study.

About 60 questionnaires were distributed for the pilot study and 39 were returned. While the pilot study was carried out to modify and if necessary improve the questionnaire, the initial analysis of the pilot data showed that there might be significant statistical differences between the teachers' beliefs and reported practices once the full data collection would be completed.

I came back in Christchurch after that pilot study and presented the pilot results in a seminar which was for the confirmation of my PhD candidature. This seminar provided me with useful critique of my overall process and of the findings that I expected might emerge from the full study.

After three months I went into the field again for the main data collection. I contacted possible participants for the survey. I also contacted different schools, head teachers, teacher trainers and teacher training institutions, asking for suggested participants of the survey. At the same time I sought possible nominations for the second stage of my study from teachers, head teachers, teacher trainers, principals, education administrators and various educational project administrators.

In the main phase of the survey 350 questionnaires were distributed and 195 were returned. Of the returned questionnaires 19 questionnaires were discarded as it seemed those are not either filled out properly or just ticked without reading.

### **Qualitative phase**

The main body of my research was qualitative. I had initially started the project with an aim to find exemplary teaching practices at the secondary level in Bangladesh. Following analysis of the survey I found significant differences between teachers' apparent understandings of what constituted effective English language teaching and their reports of actual practice. As I continued to seek out those whom their peers considered to be effective English teachers I found that they also to some extent seemed to be similarly caught between their understandings of what constituted good language teaching and the pressures of the existing examination system.

Thus one of the primary aims of my interviews with teachers, students and other stakeholders became to find factors that might cause the differences and then, as a number of influences and pressure began to emerge, to more fully explore how these influences and pressures were played out.

### **Participants and data collection for the qualitative phase**

In my initial search for effective English language teachers I sought nomination of teachers from teachers, head teachers, teacher trainers, education officers and administrators. At first I talked to my participants informally to build a rapport. In fact it is very customary in Bangladesh culture to start talking in informal situations where people would love to share their ideas and thoughts (Alam, 2016). In these informal talks participants shared many things including their teaching, things they liked about the present curriculum, textbooks and the examination system and the things that they did not like. Most of them were very interested in my project and assured me that they would try their best to cooperate with my project. In fact many did find time for me amid their busy schedule and whenever I visited their school or house in most cases they would offer tea and light snacks. In most cases the interview was recorded using an electronic

recording device. However I received a lot of important information while I was talking to participants informally on the way to the school or in their home or while I was having a cup of tea at a nearby tea-stall. I talked again later to some of the participants sometimes over the phone when I need any clarification on something. However, I asked them to sign the consent form when we began discussions and before I took their permission to phone them if I need to know something further.

When I started interviewing some of the nominated teachers, along with sharing their attempts to strive for excellence and to become successful they also shared the complexities they encountered and the barriers that they had to overcome in their teaching. As the study progressed I found that various barriers and complexities are iterated again and again by different teachers. At this point I realised that while studying exemplary practices was valuable for my study, the complexities and barriers that different teachers articulated were also equally valuable and I decided that in fact the complexities were significant and that they needed to be addressed before it could be possible to make decisions about selecting effective teachers.

Thus the main aim of the research became to explore the complexities that English teachers in Bangladesh need to address to become successful in their teaching. To explore the phenomena in depth I collected various forms of data from further groups of professional people, including bankers, graduates looking for jobs, business people, teacher trainers, examiners, technical workers abroad, and administrators in various educational development projects. In a final stage of my field work I observed an international short training programme offered by a university in an English speaking country. The participants were groups of teachers, teacher trainers, principals and educational administrators. I interviewed some of these participants and the academic coordinator of this programme. I followed the same protocol in terms of recording interviews. If I could not record the important information I received, I wrote about it in my research journal at the first opportunity.

In the following table I provide the list of participants for the qualitative phase.

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Students</b>		
	Aklima	A higher secondary student
	Bishor	A class VIII student
	Bushrah	A class VIII student
	Eva	A class VIII student
	Halima	A university graduate
	Imu	A class X student
	Luna	A first year undergraduate student
	Mahin	A class VIII student
	Muzammel	A graduate
	Nafiz	A Class VII student
	Priya	A class X student
	Rimi	An O1 level student
	Robi	A school drop out boy
	Tama	A university graduate
<b>Teachers</b>		
	Abdul Hannan	A secondary school English teacher
	Abdur Rahim	A secondary school English teacher
	Abul Kalam	A Head teacher
	Mosharrof	A secondary school English teacher
	Abul Monsur	A secondary school English teacher
	Anwar Hossain	A secondary school English teacher
	Apurbo	A secondary school English teacher
	Aslam Uddin	A secondary school English teacher

	Biplob	A secondary school English teacher
	Bokhtiar Uddin	A principal of an Alia Madrasha
	Emdad	A secondary school English teacher
	Enamul Haque	A secondary school English teacher
	Haridhan	A secondary school English teacher
	Hasan	A secondary school English teacher
	Humayun	A secondary school English teacher
	Imran	A secondary school English teacher
	Ismail Khan	A college biology teacher
	Jamal	An Alia Madrasha teacher
	Jashim Uddin	A secondary school English teacher
	Jitendranath Roy	A secondary school English teacher
	Kabir	An English lecturer
	Kamrul Hasan	A deputy principal of an school and college
	Nazrul Islam	A secondary school English teacher
	Nijam Uddin	A secondary school English teacher
	Nurul Amin	A secondary school English teacher
	Osman Gani	A secondary school English teacher
	Parvez	A secondary school English teacher
	Saifuddin	A secondary school English teacher
	Saiful	A secondary school English teacher
	Selina	A secondary school teacher
	Shafiq	A secondary school English teacher
	Shamsi Akter	A university English teacher
	Shihab Hossain	A secondary school English teacher
	Shohrab	A secondary school English teacher
	Shopan	A secondary school English teacher

<b>Teacher trainers</b>		
	Abu Saleh	A teacher trainer
	Bernard	A course co-ordinator
	Jasim Uddin	A teacher trainer
	Khan	A teacher trainer
	Mahfuj Ahmed	A teacher trainer
	Naresh Voumik	A teacher trainer
	Nikhil	A teacher trainer
	Shaila Akter	A teacher trainer
<b>Other participants</b>		
	Ahsan Kabir	A government employee
	Komol	A banker
	Mitul	A graduate
	Sumona	A parent
	Sajedur Rahman	A parent
	Sajib	A technical worker
	Shanto	A banker

**Figure 2.2: List of Participants for the qualitative phase**

In the following section I describe the principal tools that I used.

## Interviews

I used interviews extensively for collecting data for this research. Many researchers (such as Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Fontana & Fray, 2005; Glesne, 2016) highlighted the importance of interviews in qualitative data collection. Fontana and Fray (2005) considered the interview as one of the most widely used and powerful tools to gain

insight and elicit information for better understanding. They emphasised the value of open-ended interviews that allow participants to express what they see as important.

I developed an interview protocol for interviewing participating teachers and teacher trainers. However these questions were a rough guide only. As the interview progressed, I tried to make the interview spontaneous and did not try to change the flow. If any participant wanted to share any relevant story I allowed ample time to tell it and I tried to listen attentively. I asked subsequent questions when I felt that I need to know more or dig deeper (Merriam, 1998) about an issue. Interviews allowed me to gather data which might not have been possible to obtain in other ways. For example, when I saw the prevalent use of commercial notebooks and guidebooks and teachers' and students' disregard of the nationally provided English textbooks, interviews with them helped me to understand what lay behind that kind of practice. In the same way I tried to understand parents' expectation of their children or a graduate's intention to study English for job purposes. The aim of the interview with the teachers and teacher trainers was to understand participants' background, teaching philosophy, knowledge about teaching, knowledge about subject matter, day to day activities, and what they considered when they took a decision about their teaching, and possible barriers in their teaching. Similarly interviews with the other participants allow me to collect different types of data to develop a more comprehensive picture.

Interviews with the participants started in different ways. For example I started a discussion with a teacher at an Auto Tempo stand from where we went together to his school. Then he showed me his school and other facilities and then I observed his lesson. We then took tea at nearby tea stall and then we sat in a room to discuss matters further. Another teacher first took me to show his school when I arrived; then in his office we enjoyed tea together and discussed many issues.

The interviews were conducted in unstructured or semi-structured way and recorded for further analysis. The semi-structured aspect of the interviews helped me to direct the interview with some guiding questions to answer my research questions. However many of the interviews became increasingly unstructured, which gave me the flexibility to explore a wide range of issues without being restricted. They allowed participants to share their stories freely, although I asked subsequent questions whenever I needed.

## **Observation**

The use of observation served a number of key purposes: it provided a basis for discussions with participants and it highlighted aspects of practice and helped to identify problems. For this study I observed nine lessons taught by five different teachers and four English teacher training sessions conducted by two teacher trainers. In addition, I visited five rural secondary schools, one secondary madrasha in a rural area, a coaching centre in a district town, two schools and colleges in the capital and three schools in a district town. During my visits I talked to the principal, head teachers, other teachers and to students with an aim to see the different facilities that these institutions have and the barriers they experience.

For the class observations, a checklist was initially devised to make the class observation a systematic procedure. The goal of class observations in this study was to understand and describe teaching practice in its natural setting. I observed teachers' and students' behaviour and interactions, and teachers' and students' interaction patterns, the content of the teaching and classroom language. I observed how teachers prepared students for the high stake examinations and what materials were used in teaching. Different aspects of the class like organisation of the class, teachers' presentation skills, and the content of the lesson were also observed. I gathered field notes and my reflective comments for further analysis. As a researcher, my role was a non-participant observer (Liu & Maitlis, 2010) which means I did not have any role in the class except observing the class as it progressed.

## **Document analysis**

As my research focus widened from observing existing practice to investigating the factors that impacted on it, I examined a wide range of documents. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2012) affirmed that documents provide an impartial source of information as they are outside the researchers' or participants' control. The documents I examined for this study included Bangladesh education policy documents, secondary curriculum documents for English, past question papers of English from different national examinations, English



textbooks for different classes, training manuals at the teacher training colleges, and available reports from the various national and international English language development projects in Bangladesh.

### **Artefacts**

Glesne (2016) stated that artefacts are valuable additional source of data that help researchers think about new dimensions in interviews and observations, and that can add rigour to the analysis and so make the findings more trustworthy. During data collection I collected and examined a range of artefacts, including teachers' lesson plans, students' writing samples, different guidebooks and notebooks, various sheets provided by the teachers at the coaching centres, examination scripts, teaching aids and materials, digital teaching aids like multimedia projectors, power point presentations and some listening materials used by some secondary teachers.

### **Photographs**

Along with all other data I took a great many photographs to allow me to record physical surroundings, moments of interaction and facial expressions of my participants. I have also collected some photos from some of my participants. When they describe something I asked if they have any photo that would like to share. For example, a participant shared his photos that were taken when he was attending a training programme in a foreign country. Similarly some of them shared their photos that were taken on different occasion in their schools. For the most part these have served primarily to recall aspects of the case later when I left the field.

### **Research journal**

I maintained a regular research journal where I recorded things that seemed to me to be helpful for my research. For example, sometimes I got important information from people while I was having an informal chat. Sometimes I also noted my personal comments, reflections and interpretations. Keeping this research journal allowed me to record my

observations, thoughts, critical reflections, feelings which helped me during data analysis and subsequent writings. In the interview it was not possible to record participants' feelings, frustrations and emotions. Wherever possible I tried to kept note of these during observations or after interviews. These comments and reflections were useful material in my data analysis.

## **Language**

In my primary, secondary and higher secondary level education I studied in Bangla medium schools and college. Then I studied in an English medium university for my undergraduate degree. I have also experience being an English-as-second language speaker in the United Kingdom and New Zealand academic contexts and teaching others to use English as a second language. Most of the academic reading I have done was in English, but in my everyday life and in the family in most cases I use Bangla. When I talk to myself silently or think alone it is in Bangla.

For my study, language was one of the major issues. I struggled to put my thinking and ideas in writing, as sometimes I found it difficult to find the appropriate word, construct coherent sentences that make sense to a native reader, and to maintain logical arguments in long documents. So along with struggling with ideas critical thinking, reasoning and making meaning, I had to struggle continuously with language. Here I am indebted to my supervisors for their support in editing my worst mistakes.

For my research, there was a continuous switching from Bangla to English and vice versa. The study is based on Bangladesh and almost all the participants were Bangladeshi and spoke Bangla as a first language. However, as many of them were English teachers and teacher trainers by profession, a good number of participants spoke English reasonably well.

During the interview I asked them about their preference of language for the interview. Most of them preferred to be interviewed in Bangla. So the majority of the interviews were in Bangla and some of them were a mix of Bangla and English. Some interviews were in English, particularly an interview with the course coordinator of a training program in an English speaking country.

I translated the Bangla interviews myself. I checked sections of my translation with doctoral colleagues from Bangladesh. I returned some of my translations to several English speaking participants for further moderation of my translation.

## **Data Analysis**

Analysis of the survey data has already been described. In a qualitative approach aspects of data analysis are carried out simultaneously with the data collection. As I collected data I instinctively began to process it, finding connections, recognising gaps and contradictions and identifying areas where it might be useful to probe further.

At the end of the survey I looked critically at the contradictions and gaps that emerged and together with what was emerging from initial interviews, this critical analysis led me to look at the broader framework in which English language teaching occurs in Bangladesh. I consequently widened my inquiry because of the tensions and contradictions that emerged. My critical analysis of the challenges and tensions I identified led me to look further at policy documents, popular understandings and expectations and local and global influences. This led me to find critical alignments between people's stories and the broader social and pedagogical framework of English language teaching in Bangladesh.

Data collection continued as long as new themes or categories emerged. The initial stages of analysis of the qualitative data involved listening to the interview recordings several times, going through field notes, and reading widely Bangladesh newspapers and international research publications, to identify themes that might align with the data from my field experiences. Every new listening and reading gave me a new insight. I began to note key words, phrases, to highlight content from the data, critique my own reflective comments, and note emotional responses of the participants. Simultaneously, I looked for the other evidence related to the case from the observation notes, research journals, photographs and artefacts I collected.

At that point, I started writing the data as individual stories based on the interviews, observational notes, artefacts and other evidence I had collected. I then explored options of how to pull all the stories together. Then I identified five big themes emerging across

the stories that seemed to be to encompass many of the complexities in English language teaching in the Bangladesh context.

### **Rationale for selecting a storied form to present qualitative data**

After considering several ways of presenting data that informed my study, I came to the decision that presenting information from participants as stories would be the best way to stay true to the participants' voices and to make their ideas and experiences accessible to readers. Here I will explain the reasons for my decision.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stated that "education and educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories. Learners, teachers and researchers are the storytellers and the characters in their own and other stories" (p. 2). They also asserted that "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience"(p. 2).

Stake (2010) stated:

As a researcher, you do not have the privilege to invent stories, but your perception of how something has been working can be told in story form, including the stories other people tell you. Storytelling is part of the craft of the qualitative researcher (p. 170).

Krueger (2015) said that "people's stories have made me laugh, made me cry, made me angry and kept me awake at night"(p. 535). Kruger also asserted that "stories give researchers new ways to understand people and situation and tools for communicating these understanding to others. Speaking of the advantages of telling stories Patton (2015) stated that "stories organise and shape our experiences and also tell others about our lives, relationships, journeys, decisions, success, and failures" (p. 590).

Reissman (2008) illustrated the benefits of using narratives. Narrative, he claimed, allows people to understand the past through presenting past experiences. Stories can persuade people to act for a positive change and more importantly stories reveal the reality of human lives.

Stake (2003) stated that “Even when empathic and respectful of each person’s realities, the researcher decides what the case’s *own story* is, or at least what will be included in the report” (p. 144). Stake (2010) also asserted that “qualitative research is holistic research, detailed, rounded, and contextual. We would like to tell the whole story.” (p. 174).

I present aspects of my research in the form of stories as it allows me to integrate different kinds of data related to each story. For example, in writing Eva’s story I talked to her several times, observed how she took preparation for the examination, her nervousness, joy and fear regarding examination; explored various textbooks, guidebooks and notes from the private tutor that she read, and talked to her parents.

Presenting my research in the form of stories allows me to present to a class of audiences who may play a very important role in social changes and changes in the policy level but may not be willing to read complex academic arguments but may be happy to listen to or read stories if they are engaging. The story of a girl’s daily struggle, fear, joy happiness, devotion, commitment and enthusiasm to pass the examination seems to me to be one of the better ways to illustrate the impact of high stake examination in the Bangladeshi secondary school context.

Similarly the story of the teaching practices of a teacher who is not willing to change himself or may not be capable of changing himself to match with the new curriculum expectation, and the story of the teacher who despite all the contextual barriers strives to balance his teaching between teaching for the examination and teaching language skills are good ways to depict the living details of the complexities of English language teaching in the Bangladesh secondary school context.

Bangladesh people by nature love to tell stories, love to listen to stories. Some of my participants sometimes told me stories that seemed very informative and valuable for my study when I was having an informal chat with them. Sometimes it was so interesting and emotional that there was no scope for recording, and in a formal interview perhaps it would not be possible to get those authentic stories. In those cases I recorded the stories in my research journal later. In one such an informal chat Hasan, a secondary school teacher, explained why he thought inclusion of a speaking test in the national examination and empowering teachers to assess and award marks towards

national examinations would not be possible in a Bangladesh context. His account is reported in Chapter Four.

In reporting my evolving exploration of the context of English language teaching in Bangladesh I am aware that I am also telling a story of my developing understanding and this is explicit in my review of the study of the final chapter. In telling the story I have drawn on the metaphor of a river and the exploration of its many currents and obstacles. This metaphor adapts my original concept of mapping the terrain: I now present the concept as the charting of a river.

### **Trustworthiness and reliability**

My own knowledge and experience of the education system was a big help for me to decide what was important and what needed to leave out. I am familiar with this education system as I was also a student of this education system. Like many other students I went through the same procedures before moving to the United Kingdom for higher studies. Then once I finished my study and had held jobs for a few years in the United Kingdom I worked as a lecturer at a university in Bangladesh. My experience as a student, as a teacher and as a researcher of the education system gives me the opportunity for long time engagement. I have also spent around nine months in Bangladesh for data collection. I met my participants several times during the data collection period and apart from the scheduled meetings I also met with some of them in different informal occasions.

Another important aspect in ensuring the trustworthiness of my findings is that I collected different types of data from multiple sources. When I analysed them and wrote about them I cross-checked my information with that from different sources and I aligned my interpretations with participants' understandings and other information from the field and from published materials. I tried to ensure that my presentation of findings, wherever possible, was based on evidence from different sources, from different types of data and checked that more than one person's comments or views were supporting the assertion. Where it was appropriate I have checked with my participants to clarify that my understanding from their interview was matching what they meant. I sought to present a clear detailed narrative.

I have maintained a research journal which includes my own comments and interpretations, observation notes, and my interpretive notes about different issues, and while I was writing I constantly checked those sources as well as the photographs I had collected.

Based on this study I have given several presentations in international conferences and at the university where I am conducting my PhD study. I have also sent articles based on my research to journals articles where I have received critical feedback from reviewers. I have taken the opportunities to discuss my study with the academics from renowned universities whenever I have had the chance. All these critical feedbacks, comments, suggestions and questions have helped me to think further about my study and refine it.

## **Chapter Three: Survey of teachers' beliefs and practices**

This chapter reports the results of a survey that was completed by 216 secondary English teachers across Bangladesh. The survey focused on teachers' beliefs about the qualities of an effective English teacher in the Bangladesh context and their reported classroom practices. Teachers were asked to report any factors that supported or hindered their ability to be effective English teachers.

The intention of the survey was to generate a snapshot of the beliefs and practices of secondary English teachers in Bangladesh secondary schools. This provides a basis for insights into what is considered effective teaching of English in Bangladesh, and into barriers and enablers that support or inhibit the implementation of effective teaching. The results of the survey have prompted my further examination of the complex pressures within the Bangladesh educational context in order to better understand the ways teachers are addressing the practical challenges of teaching English. This chapter describes the content of the survey, reports and analyses the results and proposes a number of questions that arise from the analysis.

As explained in the first chapter, English teaching in Bangladesh has undergone substantive changes over the last two decades because of the national goal of making citizens more commercially and academically competent by increasing their communicative ability in English (Power, Shaheen, Solly, Woodward & Burton, 2012).

As in many other countries, in Bangladesh English plays an important role in education, administration, judiciary, trade and international communication. English is considered one of the basic requirements for Bangladeshi nationals to enter the global job market, which in turn is expected to strengthen the economy of Bangladesh. Initiatives including reforming the English curriculum, introducing new textbooks, modernising classrooms, and arranging professional training for English teachers have been undertaken to improve teaching and learning English. The 2010 secondary curriculum policy in Bangladesh identifies properly trained teachers as central to driving the changes needed in teaching and learning in order to achieve curriculum goals and objectives. Despite substantial investment in professional development for teachers, there has been



relatively little research into actual teaching practices within the Bangladeshi context and concepts of what constitutes effective English language teaching tend to be based on advocacy of particular methods rather than on empirical research. This survey therefore explored Bangladeshi secondary English teachers' beliefs about effective English language teaching and their reported practices.

### **What the literature says about effective teaching**

The concept of effective teaching has been dealt with from different perspectives in research such as personal qualities, pedagogical skills, classroom practices, subject matter knowledge and teachers' thinking and decision making. The term *effective teacher* is open ended and in the literature different terms are used such as good teacher (Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001; Hopkins & Stern, 1996), effective teacher (Duffy & Hoffman, 1991; Stronge, 2007), influential teacher (Rudell, 1995), successful teacher, exemplary teacher (Ladson-Billings, 2009) star teacher (Haberman, 1995), excellent teacher (Radebaugh & Johnson, 1971), caring teacher (Thompson, 2010), and qualified teacher (Ingersoll, 2001). There are numerous interpretations and debate regarding the definition, interpretation, and characteristics of such teachers. Consequently, Ingersoll (2001, P. 42) noted that "there is surprisingly little consensus on how to define a qualified teacher." However, in this chapter these terms are used fairly interchangeably to refer to effective and successful teachers.

### **Characteristics of effective teachers**

In the last four decades, many studies, mainly in the western context, have been carried out to define and identify the characteristics of effective teachers (Haberman, 1995; Stronge, 2007; White, 1989). Hopkins and Stern (1996) provided an account of the characteristics of an excellent teacher. The authors asserted that good teachers have passionate commitment to help their students to do better, have affectionate feelings for their students and maintain a warm, caring and affectionate relationship. Further, they have sound knowledge about the subject matter and good understanding of various

models of teaching and learning. They trust and take part in collaborative work with their colleagues and believe in reflective practice.

Based on the previous research literature, Stronge (2007) categorised teachers' effectiveness research into six domains. The first is the prerequisites of effective teachers. These prerequisites to becoming an effective teacher, as Stronge concluded, are having good verbal ability, knowledge about teaching and learning, knowledge about subject matter, teaching experiences and certificate status. The second domain is the teacher as a person. Effective teachers demonstrate a caring attitude and fairness, possess a positive attitude toward teaching, promote enthusiasm and motivation for learners, and they are reflective thinkers. The third is effective classroom management and organisation. Stronge (2007) concluded that effective teachers establish and maintain a favourable classroom environment that is safe, congenial, and increases learning potential. The fourth area is how these teachers organise their instruction. They set goals, plan instruction, maximise instructional time and create a classroom atmosphere where students are required to succeed. The fifth is how they implement instruction. According to Stronge, effective teachers adopt instructions that meet individual needs, communicate effectively in the class, use different kinds of instructional strategies and engage students in the learning process. The sixth is how teachers evaluate students and monitor their progress. Effective teachers assign homework, monitor students' progress and give feedback and respond to different individual's needs.

Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphill (1991) while studying teachers in a low income area, argued that more effective teachers expose students to a wide range of reading materials, encourage them to use the library, ask students stimulating and thought provoking questions, provide clear instruction, and create a helpful and pleasant classroom environment. They also assert that effective teachers take students to field trip and museums visit and arrange sessions that discusses newspapers and magazines that they read at home. Clarks (1993) asserted that an effective teacher knows and understands the curriculum's contents, goal and objectives, uses a variety of instructional strategies relevant to the current research and offers a favourable environment congenial for the students. He also argued that an effective teacher increases students' knowledge and achievement and maintains a professional relationship with students, parents, and

educational peers. Rudell (1995) asserted that influential teachers are highly motivated, and are ready to offer help even for students' personal problems. They have the ability to adjust their teaching according to individual student's need. They monitor and provide feedback on students' progress, possess good knowledge about pedagogy and contents and understand how to use them effectively in their teaching.

Some research has specifically focused on studying effective teachers for low performing urban schools and effective teachers of minority students. Poplin et al. (2011) studied thirty-one highly effective teachers in nine low performing schools in Los Angeles County and identified some of the characteristics of highly effective teachers in low performing schools. These teachers were strict, maintained intensity in academic work, and moved around the class frequently while they taught. The authors also asserted that these effective teachers believed in traditional, teacher directed teaching practices, encouraged students to think of their future, and practised certain virtues like respecting others, working hard and thinking critically. These teachers were highly optimistic about their students' future and they maintained a strong respectful relationship with the students. Ladson-Billings (2009) studied exemplary teaching practices of eight teachers of African-American students. She examined these teachers' unique teaching styles and reported their strength in establishing students' cultural identity. Ahmed (2011) while studying effective Arabic language teachers concluded that effective language teachers are those who are adaptable, possesses high ambition about their students, are aware of their learners' needs and maintain a balance between their learners' needs and high expectations. They also ensure a positive learning environment for the learners.

Although a considerable amount of work has been done to identify the characteristics of an effective teacher, there is continued debate regarding the definition of effective teachers (Borich, 1986; Brown & Atkin, 1990). Teaching qualities that are considered effective in one setting may be deemed less effective in another setting (Brosh, 1996). A teacher who is considered as 'expert teacher' in one culture may be considered as 'terrible' in another culture (Berliner, 2001). Moreover, teaching skills that are effective for language teaching may not necessarily be considered effective for other subjects (Borg, 2006). There may be some characteristics that are unique to foreign language teachers (Hammadou & Bernhardt, 1987). Brosh (1996) explored Israeli teachers' and

students' views on the characteristics of effective language instructors. His study concluded that an effective language teacher should have adequate command over the target language, good knowledge about subject matter, and ability to communicate with others. He also asserted that good organising skills, teaching skills and ability to motivate students and ability to show fairness to all students are the qualities of effective foreign language teachers.

There are many studies in effective teaching and different methodological approaches have been taken to study effective teaching in different subject areas, for example collecting data using a questionnaire (Park & Lee, 2006), grading characteristics (Brosh, 1996), based on previous research (Stronge, 2007) teacher interview and classroom observations (Ayres, Sawyer & Dinham, 2004) taking students' perceptions to identify effective teachers (Cooper & McIntyre, 1993), and culturally sensitive approaches (Ladson-Billing, 2009; Macfarlane, 2007).

Determining the relationships between teachers' beliefs and their practices is a complex matter. It is generally assumed that language teachers' theoretical beliefs play an important role in their instructional practices and decision making (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Johnson, 1992; Kuzborska, 2011). Fang (1996) summarised previous research on teachers' beliefs and practices. Basturkmen (2012) also reviewed more recent research on the correspondence between language teachers' stated beliefs and practices. The author concluded most of the research in this area has utilised a case study methodology. Further, findings about the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices are contradictory. While some of the research found a positive relation between teachers' beliefs and practices (such as Kim, 2006; Tam, 2006), there are good number of studies (for example Klein, 2004; Mitchell, 2005; Sinprajakpol, 2004) that found little correspondence between language teachers' stated belief and their practices.

In the present study, along with the teachers' beliefs about effective teaching, teachers reported practices are also included in order to explore if there is any discrepancy between the Bangladeshi English teachers' beliefs and practices, and, if there are discrepancies, to examine what factors might account for them.

## **Designing the survey**

In designing the survey I drew on my own knowledge of the Bangladesh context together with the issues highlighted in previous Bangladesh research and principles of language learning identified in international literature.

In the survey, statements were included to understand Bangladeshi English teachers' beliefs about the prerequisites of an effective teacher in Bangladeshi secondary school context (such as English proficiency, relevant formal qualification, experiences).

Teachers' proficiency in the target language is seen by many as an important factor in implementing communicative language teaching. For example, Hu (2004) and Littlewood (2007) identified teachers' lack of command in English or lack of confidence in their own proficiency in English as a barrier to implement communicative language teaching. Li (1998) noted that teachers' lack of proficiency, and specifically deficiency, in spoken language stands as a barrier for teachers to use communicative language teaching in Korea. There are researchers that found positive links between the use of the mother tongue and foreign language teaching and students' learning. For example, Butzkamm (2003) stated that "mother tongue is the master key to foreign languages, the tool which gives us the fastest, surest, most precise and most complete means of accessing a foreign language" (p. 31).

Within Bangladesh there is an expectation that English should be the medium of instruction when teaching English in secondary schools. The National Curriculum (2012) encourages teachers to use English as a medium of instruction in the English class. It also states that students will be competent in all four skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and that students will be competent to undertake effective communication in real life situations. Philipson (1992) commented that there are several myths that neo-colonial agents use to promote English. One of them is the monolingual fallacy which advocates that, for the maximum output, English should be taught exclusively in English.

My pilot study, particularly early discussions with rural English teachers and teacher trainers, indicated that there is a dilemma as to what should be the medium of instruction in the class. While some teachers said that the English class must be in English, some teachers were not in agreement. For some teachers it was difficult to conduct classes in English. Some of the teachers felt that they did not have the necessary skills required to

conduct a class in English. Some teachers said that they did not use only English as a medium of instruction as not all students in their class would be able to follow the instruction if it was exclusively in English. Thus there tends to be a dilemma as what should be the medium of instruction in the English classes. Therefore statements were included to see what the Bangladeshi English teachers' beliefs about the language of classroom instruction were and what their current practices were.

Tests exert pressure on teaching and learning, either positively or negatively (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng & Curtis, 2004). Often the impact of test has consequences beyond teaching and learning in classrooms (Wall, 2000). In the Bangladesh context there is growing criticism that teaching and learning in the English classroom is mainly preparing students for the national examinations (Chowdhury, 2010; Maniruzzaman & Hoque, 2010) and that the current assessment system encourages students to memorise answers for various questions and so there is a significant gap between what teachers are expected to teach as outlined in the curriculum and what is assessed in the national examinations (Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman, & Khan, 2014). Statements in the survey were included to examine to what extent an effective English teacher in Bangladesh should *teach for the test* and to examine how English teachers report their practices in relation to teaching for test.

The role of grammar in teaching and learning English at the secondary and higher secondary level is another disputed issue. When Communicative Language Teaching was introduced in 1998 replacing the previous Grammar-Translation based syllabus and textbooks, the value of grammar teaching was sidelined. It was expected that students would not learn about grammar rather they would learn grammatical usage while they used language in context. So grammar was not currently assessed in isolation in the national examination. It has been reported that students' grammar skills have been deteriorating due to the lack of emphasis on grammar. To address the issue grammar was then reintroduced in the curriculum and now in the Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C) and Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C) examination thirty percent (60 out of 200) of the marks are allocated to test students' grammatical knowledge. Although it is stated in the English curriculum (2012) that grammar should be taught in context, grammar is assessed in isolation within the national examinations. All other examinations that are

conducted by the school authority follow the national examination question patterns. It was thus pertinent to include items investigating teachers' belief about how grammar should be taught within the survey.

In language teaching there are arguments about how to correct students' mistakes and give feedback, and about whether correcting students' mistakes and giving feedback is always beneficial (Bitchener & Knoch, 2015; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). In the survey some items were included to understand teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to giving feedback and correcting students' mistakes.

The National Curriculum for English (2012) places emphasis on the use of various kinds of audio visual materials in teaching. Items were included about the use of audio visual materials in the classroom.

One of the main aims of the introduction of the communicative syllabus and textbook in 1998 was that students would learn the language by practising four language skills and equal emphasis would be given in all four skills of the language. In the curriculum emphasis was given on learning a language by actually practising all four skills:

This practice, which is carried out through the four language skills of speaking, listening reading and writing, usually in an interactive mode, underlies the communicative approach to language teaching (NCTB, 2001).

However, as no marks are allocated for tests in speaking and listening in the high stake Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C) and Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C) examinations these two skills are not practised in the same way as reading and writing. Thus items were included in the questionnaire that ask about teachers' beliefs and practices regarding various oral communicative classroom activities.

While studies of effective teaching, reviewed earlier in this chapter, were carried out in different contexts using different approaches, those studies were mainly carried out in developed countries. In a developing country's context and specifically in the Bangladesh context some of the characteristics are possibly the same as those identified in a western context. For example, in the literature effective teachers' personal characteristics are identified in various research studies, such as *committed* (Hopkins & Stern, 1996), *caring*, *fair*, *positive attitude*, *promoting enthusiasm* (Stronge, 2007). These could also be

considered as characteristics of effective teachers in the Bangladesh context. So too could Stronge's second category of *teacher as a person*. The national curriculum (2012) for English in secondary level in Bangladesh also emphasised teachers' positive attitude, building teacher-students relationships, and having high expectation about learners. It also forbade teachers to use insulting comments about learners such as *mathaygobor* (what a bullshit head), *tokediyekichuhobena*, *opodartho* (you are a worthless guy), *ghadha* (you are nothing but an ass) (National Curriculum, 2012, p.18)

On the other hand there are certain aspects of teaching that are, at least to some extent, different from the context of western countries and perhaps even unique to the Bangladesh context. For example, Stronge's (2007) sixth category of effective teachers is how teachers evaluate and monitor their students. In Bangladesh, secondary level assessment and evaluation follow a strict pattern. The high stake examination is the ultimate yardstick to assess students' learning. All other examinations follow the patterns of high stake examinations like S.S.C and H.S.C. Based on the effective teaching literature and considering the contextual factors of teaching English in Bangladesh, the following attributes can be considered as characteristics of an effective teacher in a Bangladeshi secondary school context.

#### *Teachers who teach following the curriculum*

The curriculum for English (2012) at the secondary level emphasises developing students' four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. The curriculum also emphasises "helping learners acquire basic skills of English language for effective communication at different sphere including contemporary work places and higher education" (National Curriculum, 2012). Teachers are encouraged to provide opportunities in class for students to practice all four skills in an integrative manner in a meaningful context. Interactions between teacher and students and students with each other are also encouraged in the curriculum.

#### *Knowledge about pedagogy and subject matter*

Having sound knowledge about pedagogy as well as subject matter knowledge is considered as essential qualities of an effective teachers in different research studies (such as Hopkins & Stern, 1996; Stronge, 2007). These qualities are also equally



important in determining a successful and effective English teacher in Bangladesh secondary school context.

#### *Teachers whose students succeed in the examination*

In the Bangladesh context, it is unrealistic and impractical to be judged as an effective teacher if the students fail to perform well in the examinations. Examination results dominate students' subsequent study and careers.

#### *Ability to teach successfully despite numerous contextual barriers*

Different institutional and infrastructural constraints like large classes, excessive teaching loads, limited resources, inadequate teacher training, test-driven teaching, discrepancy between curriculum goals and implementation policy are considered as some of the barriers in developing teaching excellence in Bangladesh, and these barriers intensify the complexity of teaching in Bangladesh. Even though there are some opportunities for in-service teacher professional training, not enough teachers are getting opportunities for training (Hamid, 2010). To become a successful and effective teacher in the Bangladesh secondary context a teacher needs to find ways of teaching despite all these barriers. Teachers who can show innovation in teaching despite all these barriers could be models for other teachers to follow.

#### *Teachers with high personal values*

There are many studies that examine the importance of values. Various aspects have been focused by different researchers. Some of the examples are: caring attitude, positive attitude, fairness, affectionate feeling. These kinds of personal values are also important in the Bangladesh context.

### **Research questions**

This study sought to address the following interrelated research questions:

- What are Bangladeshi secondary English teachers' perceptions of the backgrounds, characteristics, beliefs and classroom practices of effective English teachers at the secondary level in Bangladesh?

- Are there any significant differences between teachers' beliefs about the characteristics of effective English teachers and their reported classroom practices?
- What are the barriers to effective English teaching in Bangladesh?

Chapter Two reports my use of a pilot study and how results of and feedback from the pilot study lead me to reshape the final survey.

Chapter Two also contains a table showing the main sections of the survey and how many items were in each section. Most items used a five point likert scale. Questions regarding barrier were open ended.

### ***Participants***

As detailed in Chapter Two the participants were 216 secondary school (non-government and government) English teachers from different regions of Bangladesh. A majority (n=129) of the participants were attending CPD training in English. There were 146 men and 66 women.

Participants' teaching experiences ranged from less than 1 year to more than 10 years. The majority of the respondents were 26- 35 years old (57.5%, N=123), followed by (25.7%, N= 55) respondents aged between 36- 45. Only 6.1% of the respondents was under 25 years of age.

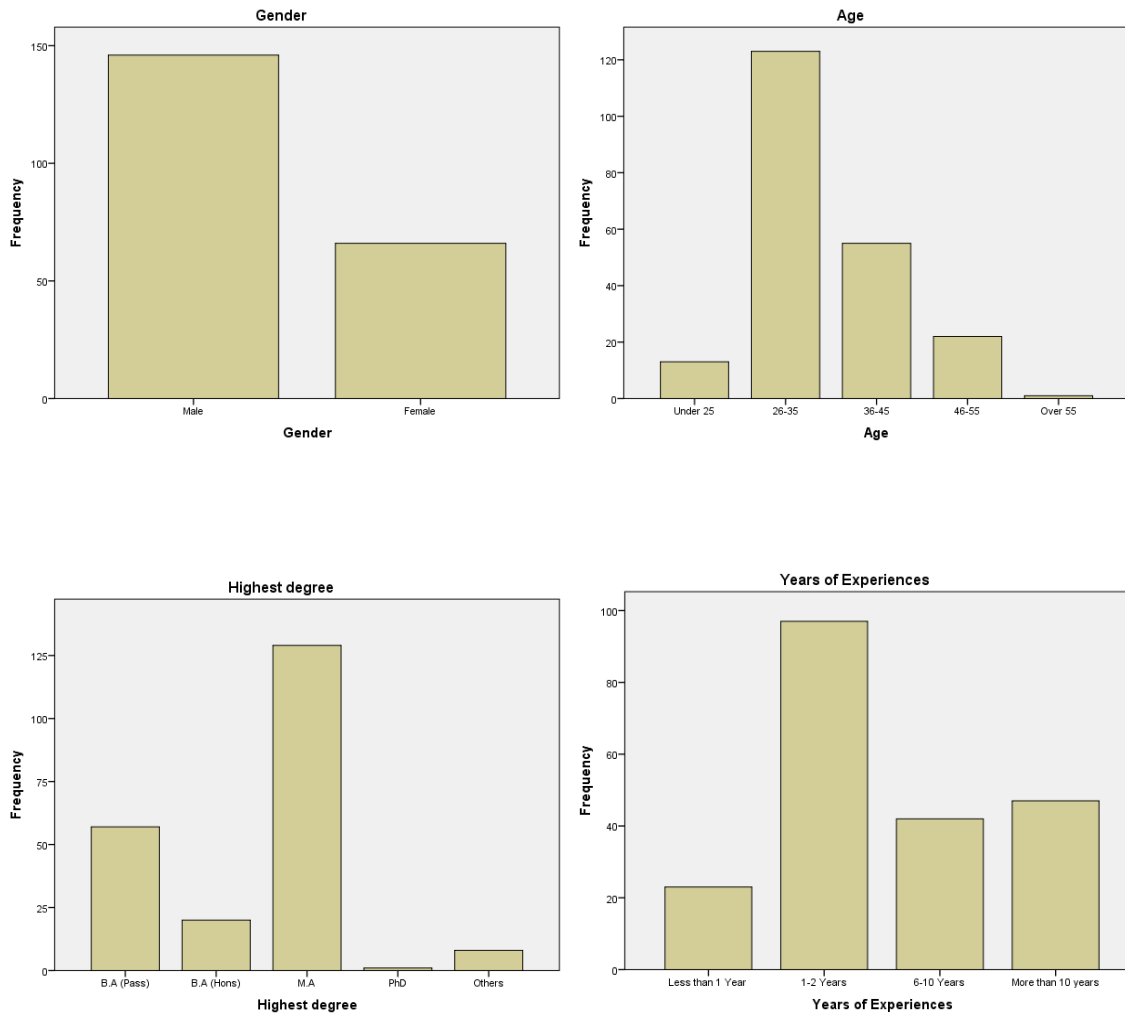
In terms of qualifications, 60% participants (n-129) held Masters degrees followed by 26.5% of the participants (n-57) having B.A. (Pass) degrees<sup>3</sup>, and 9.3% of the participants (n-20) holding B.A. (Hons) degree.

In terms of teaching experience, 45% of the participants (n-97) had teaching experience of between 1-5 years, followed by 22.5% of the participants (n -47) having more than 10 years teaching experience, 20% of the participants (n-42) with 6-10 years experience and only 11% having less than one year experience.

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<sup>3</sup> B.A. (Pass) is now a three year degree. B.A. (Hons) takes four years. Previously B.A. (Pass) was a two year degree

The figures 3.1 summarises the gender, age, qualifications and years of experience of the participants.



**Figure 3.1 Demographic information about the participants**

## Teachers' competencies in English

The table 3.1 reports the first six questions of the survey that examine beliefs about the qualities of effective teachers in Bangladesh secondary schools.

**Table 3.1: Teachers' qualifications and experiences**

	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
For an effective English teacher proficiency in oral English is more important than proficiency in reading and writing	25.9%	37.5%	9.7%	23.6%	3.2%
An effective English teacher must need to have degree in English	40.9%	29.8%	10.7%	17.2%	1.4%
An effective English teacher is someone who is well conversant in English grammar	21.9%	57.2%	4.7%	14.0%	2.3%
An effective English teacher should have at least three years experience of teaching English	19.0%	36.1%	11.1%	31.0%	2.8%
An effective English teacher is someone whose students do very well in the exam	15.4%	48.1%	9.3%	23.8%	3.3%
To become an effective English teacher it is essential to know the English culture	15.0	36.2	8.5	32.9	7.5

Analyses of the responses regarding beliefs about effective teaching indicated that the majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statements about the importance oral proficiency, having a relevant degree in English, showing good grammatical knowledge, having more than three years teaching experience, knowledge of English culture. They also agreed that an effective English teacher' students should excel in the examination. While all six items received a strong response indicating belief in their importance, it is noteworthy that knowledge of culture is marked as essential by fewer participants than having an English degree and knowing grammar. Moreover, although most teachers thought success in the exam was important, only 15% thought it was highly important. This factor is addressed more fully in chapter four.

## English curriculum

The table 3.2 reports teachers' beliefs about the present English curriculum and its suitability in the Bangladesh context.

**Table 3. 2: Teachers' beliefs about curriculum**

An effective teacher in Bangladesh is someone who.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
has thorough understanding of the English Curriculum goals and objectives	43.1%	50.5%	2.8%	3.2%	0.5%
<b>Teaching practices and beliefs</b>					
The present Curriculum of English at Secondary level in Bangladesh focuses on all four (listening, speaking, reading, writing) skills of language.	46.5%	32.9%	3.3%	12.7%	4.7%
The present Curriculum of English at the Secondary level is suitable for Bangladesh.	19.4%	50.5%	7.9%	19.4%	2.8%

The responses, presented in Table 3.2, showed that having good understanding of the curriculum's goals and objectives was considered a characteristic of an effective English teacher by over 90% of participants. Nearly 80% reported that they understood that the curriculum called for the development of oracy as well as skills in dealing with written text. How these responses relate to practice will be discussed below. A smaller but still large number of respondents believed that the present curriculum for English at the secondary level is suitable in Bangladesh context. It is, however, noteworthy that over 20% had reservations about the suitability.

### *Language of instruction*

The table 3.3 reports responses in relation to beliefs and practices about the instructional language in the English classroom.

**Table 3.3: Teachers' beliefs about language of instruction**

An effective teacher in Bangladesh is someone who.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
always speaks English in the class	27.6%	44.9%	2.8%	21.5%	3.3%
uses English as well as Bangla as a medium of instruction in the class	8.8%	32.9%	6.0%	45.8%	6.5%
asks students to speak English from the first class	20.7%	47.4%	5.2%	23.0%	3.8%
asks students to speak English when the students think they are confident to speak in English	13.6%	29.6%	3.8%	46.0%	7.0%
<b>Teaching practices and beliefs</b>					
I always speak English in my class	15.8%	37.2%	6.0%	38.1%	2.8%

A high percentage of respondents agreed that an effective English teacher should always speak English in the class and that students should be asked to speak English from the first class of the academic year. This attitude seems to be echoed in the response to the question about the mixed use of English and Bangla: a small majority of respondents seemed to believe that an effective teacher does not use a blended language approach. Regarding their reported practice just over half of the respondents reported that they always speak English in the class. As I analysed the results I wondered to what extent this attitude towards the use of English was a reflection that many of my participants were attending a training course that emphasised the importance of the active use of English. My own experience of classrooms suggested this was not common practice. This was an area into which I decided I needed to probe further when I interviewed students and teachers and is reported in the chapters that follow.

### ***Teaching aids and materials***

The table 3.4 reports teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the use of various teaching aid and materials in English classrooms.

**Table 3. 4: Teachers' beliefs about teaching aids and materials**

An effective teacher in Bangladesh is someone who.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
follows NCTB prescribed Textbooks rigorously to teach in the class.	33.0%	44.7%	6.5%	12.6%	3.3%
prepares materials by himself/herself to teach in the class	37.0%	45.4%	11.6%	5.1%	0.9%
uses different technologies (e.g. Computer, projector) in teaching	31.0%	42.1%	10.2%	15.7%	0.9
uses authentic materials and realia ( e.g.- map, picture, food, clothes) in the class	51.9%	39.4%	6.0%	1.4%	1.4%
<b>Teaching practices and beliefs</b>					
I use different teaching aids like flash cards, audio, video, etc, while I teach in the class.	28.7%	50.9%	6.9%	10.6%	2.8%
I use different technologies in the class	12.9%	34.8%	10.5%	35.2%	6.7%

Almost 80% percent of respondents believed that an effective English teacher in Bangladesh should follow the nationally prescribed textbooks rigorously to teach in the class. Similarly, preparing materials by the teacher to teach in the class and using authentic materials and realia in the class were reported as qualities of an effective English teacher. More than 70% responded agreed that an effective English teacher should use technologies in class. In their reports of practice, a high percentage of respondents indicated that they use various kinds of teaching aids in their teaching. However the percentage of respondents who reported using technology in their classes was comparatively low.

## Teaching for the test

The table 3.5 reports the results from questions about teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching to the test.

**Table 3.5 : Teachers' beliefs and practice about *teaching for the test***

An effective teacher in Bangladesh is someone who.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
teaches only what will be important for the final exam	2.3%	7.9%	7.9%	51.4%	30.4%
prepares possible questions and answers for the final exam for his/her students	3.2%	25.0%	7.4%	42.6%	21.8%
arranges mock test similar to the final test	10.8%	44.8%	12.3%	24.5%	7.5%
Teaching practices and beliefs					
My Principal/Headmaster asks me to adopt teaching methods which will ensure students' good mark in the exam.	16.7%	50.0%	12.5%	16.7%	4.2%
Student parents' ask me to teach in the way which will ensure their children's good marks in the exam.	23.1%	47.7%	7.4%	16.7%	5.1%
My students expect me to teach them what is more likely to come in the exam.	29.6%	48.6%	4.2%	15.3%	2.3%
My teaching style would have been different if there were no exam.	29.8%	34.4%	13.0%	17.7%	5.1%
When I prepare materials for teaching, I always consider what is important for the Examination.	12.6%	44.9%	6.5%	32.2%	3.7%
I prepare possible questions and answers for the final exam for my students	9.3%	48.1%	8.4%	30.4%	3.7%
I arrange mock class test which is similar to S.S.C test format.	10.7%	52.1%	13.0%	21.4%	2.8%
I arrange mock class test which is similar to S.S.C test format.	10.7%	52.1%	13.0%	21.4%	2.8%
I teach what will help students to get good grades in the examination.	25.9%	37.5%	13.4%	27.3%	3.2%
I do not teach certain passages from the textbook because I consider these less important for the examination.	8.8%	27.3%	9.7%	43.1%	11.1%



I teach different exam techniques so that students can do well in the exam.	27.3%	51.9%	4.2%	14.8%	1.9%
Speaking and listening test needs to be included in the S.S.C examination.	46.8%	40.3%	4.2%	7.9%	0.9%

A number of items asked respondents about different aspects of teaching for the test. It is noteworthy that there was a predominantly negative response to the suggestion that an effective English teacher “is someone who teaches only what will be important for the final exam”. In addition, more than 60% of the respondents disagreed with the statement “an effective English teacher in Bangladesh is someone who prepares possible questions and answers for the final exam for his/her students”. These results indicate that the respondents were aware that that preparation for the examination is only part of what is needed in teaching English. Since this result is different from what is often reported in the literature and from my own experience, this is another area I decided to probe further in my field work, and the impact of examination is explored in depth in Chapter Four.

However, the results reported in the above table also show that most of the respondents felt pressure from various parties to teach in ways that would meet the examination format. These included pressure from the principal and students’ parents to teach for examination success and pressure from students to teach what was likely to come up in the examination. More than 50% believed that an effective teacher should arrange mock test similar to the final test. More than seventy percent of the respondents agreed that they considered what is important for the examination while they prepared materials for teaching, and prepared possible questions and answers relevant to the final examination, and that they taught different test taking techniques so that students could do well in the examination. They arranged mock class tests and taught what they believed would help students to get good grades. However, over half of the participating teachers disagreed with the statement that “I do not teach certain passages from the textbook because I consider these less important for the examination”.

A good number of the respondents reported that if there were no tests their teaching style would have been different.

### ***Preferred teaching methods and activities***

The table 3.6 reports teachers' beliefs and practices about using various teaching methods and classroom activities.

**Table 3.6: Preferred teaching methods and activities in the class**

An effective teacher in Bangladesh is someone who.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
has the ability to adopt different teaching methodologies	40.7%	52.3%	4.2%	2.8%	0.00%
gives lectures and expect students to be an attentive listener throughout the class	23.4%	35.5%	6.1%	26.6%	8.4%
lets students talk most of the time in the class	24.2%	40.5%	8.8%	22.8%	3.7%
arranges group work frequently	36.3%	50.0%	3.8%	8.0%	1.9%
prefers to give lectures than arranging group work and pair work in the class.	17.4%	22.1%	6.6%	40.8%	13.1%
teaches different language skills rather than focusing on any particular skill in a single lesson	27.9%	34.9%	10.2%	22.8%	4.2%
puts equal importance on all four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) of a language in a single lesson while he/she teaches.	32.4%	33.8%	3.8%	20.7%	9.4%
Teaching practices and beliefs					
I let my students talk most of the time in my class.	13.6%	39.4%	11.7%	32.9%	2.3%
I encourage students to work 'in groups' and 'in pairs' in my class.	30.4%	46.7%	13.6%	7.9%	1.4%
Group work is a waste of valuable class time.	1.9%	4.7%	5.1%	52.6%	35.8%
Group work or pair work is not very effective in my class.	3.3%	6.6%	13.2%	51.4%	25.5%
While I teach, I follow the principles of Communicative Language Teaching	26.9%	28.8%	19.3%	34.2%	0.9%
<b>Please indicate how often you teach following skills in your English class</b>	Never	1-2 times a week	3-4 times a week	In every class	

I teach speaking in the class	10.9%	58.3%	11.4%	19.4%
I teach listening in the class	14.4%	43.7%	17.8%	24.1%
I teach reading in the class.	0.6%	21.7%	40.6%	37.1%
I teach writing in the class.	2.3%	28.0%	38.9%	30.9%
I teach pronunciation in the class.	6.3%	38.5%	21.8%	33.3%
I teach vocabulary in the class.	1.7%	13.8%	27.6%	56.9%

Over 90% of the participating teachers believed that an effective English teacher should have the ability to adopt different teaching methodologies when they teach. Letting students talk most of the time in the English class and frequently arranging group work in the class were rated highly as qualities of an effective English teacher. The statements relating to the teaching methodology, “An effective teacher in Bangladesh is someone who teaches different language skills rather than focusing on any particular skills in a single lesson” and “an effective teacher is someone who puts equal importance on all four skills of a language in a single lesson”, also received positive responses from more than half of the participants. In their report of practice, a majority of the participants indicated that they practiced student-centred class activities such as group work and pair work, and these were more effective than lecture based teaching. It is noteworthy that a majority of respondents indicated that vocabulary and reading were the most frequently taught areas of English in their classes.

## Teaching Grammar

The table 3.7 shows teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching grammar.

**Table 3.7: Teachers' beliefs and practices about teaching grammar**

An effective teacher in Bangladesh is someone who.....					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
teaches grammatical rules first and then gives examples and exercises.	10.2%	26.9%	3.7%	44.4%	14.8%
uses activities where students are required to understand certain grammatical rules	22.2%	63.9%	3.2%	10.2%	0.5%
teaches simple sentence structure first before moving to complex sentence structure	39.0%	30.0%	13.1%	14.1%	3.8%
<b>Teaching practices and beliefs</b>					
I teach grammatical rules only if it is necessary.	16.4%	44.6%	2.8%	32.4%	3.8%
I teach grammatical rules first and then give examples and exercises to practice.	9.3%	41.2%	5.6%	35.6%	8.3%

Across all these statements, it seems that teachers saw importance in teaching grammar and reported they do so in practice, although a majority indicated that they taught grammar rules “only if necessary”. It is noteworthy that the majority of the teachers indicated that it was better to teach grammar contextually, but a slightly majority indicated that in practice they taught grammar rules first, before giving examples. Nearly 70% indicated they taught sentence structures progressively, moving from simple structures to complex ones.

### ***Giving feedback***

The table 3.8 reports teachers' beliefs and practices regarding giving feedback and correcting students' mistakes. A majority of teachers indicated that they believed students' mistakes should be addressed in some way and reported that they did so in practice. More teachers reported that they believe it was more effective to give indirect hints to indicate errors than to correct them openly, and opinions about whether errors should be corrected immediately were fairly divided. It is noteworthy that across all the statements in this cluster, sizeable groups chose the *no comment* option.

**Table3. 8: Teachers' practices and beliefs about giving feedback**

An effective teacher in Bangladesh is someone who.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
tells students directly what the mistakes are and give correct answers	14.1%	21.2%	19.2%	31.0%	14.6%
uses indirect hints or cues to indicate error	16.4%	43.5%	16.8%	20.6%	2.8%
corrects students mistakes immediately when they occur	7.9%	31.2%	14.9%	34.4%	11.6%
<b>Teaching practices and beliefs</b>					
I tell students immediately if they make any mistake and give them correct answer	14.0%	31.3%	7.5%	38.3%	8.9%
I use indirect hints or cues to indicate error	15.1%	55.2%	13.2%	15.1%	1.4%

### **Discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and reported practices**

The results of the Chi square test showed that there were significant differences ( $p < .001$ ) between the frequencies for the teachers' beliefs and their reported practice for *instructional language in the classroom, teaching to the test, preparing possible questions and answers for the examination, using technology in class, teaching grammatical rules first before giving exercises, correcting students' mistake immediately*. This suggests that

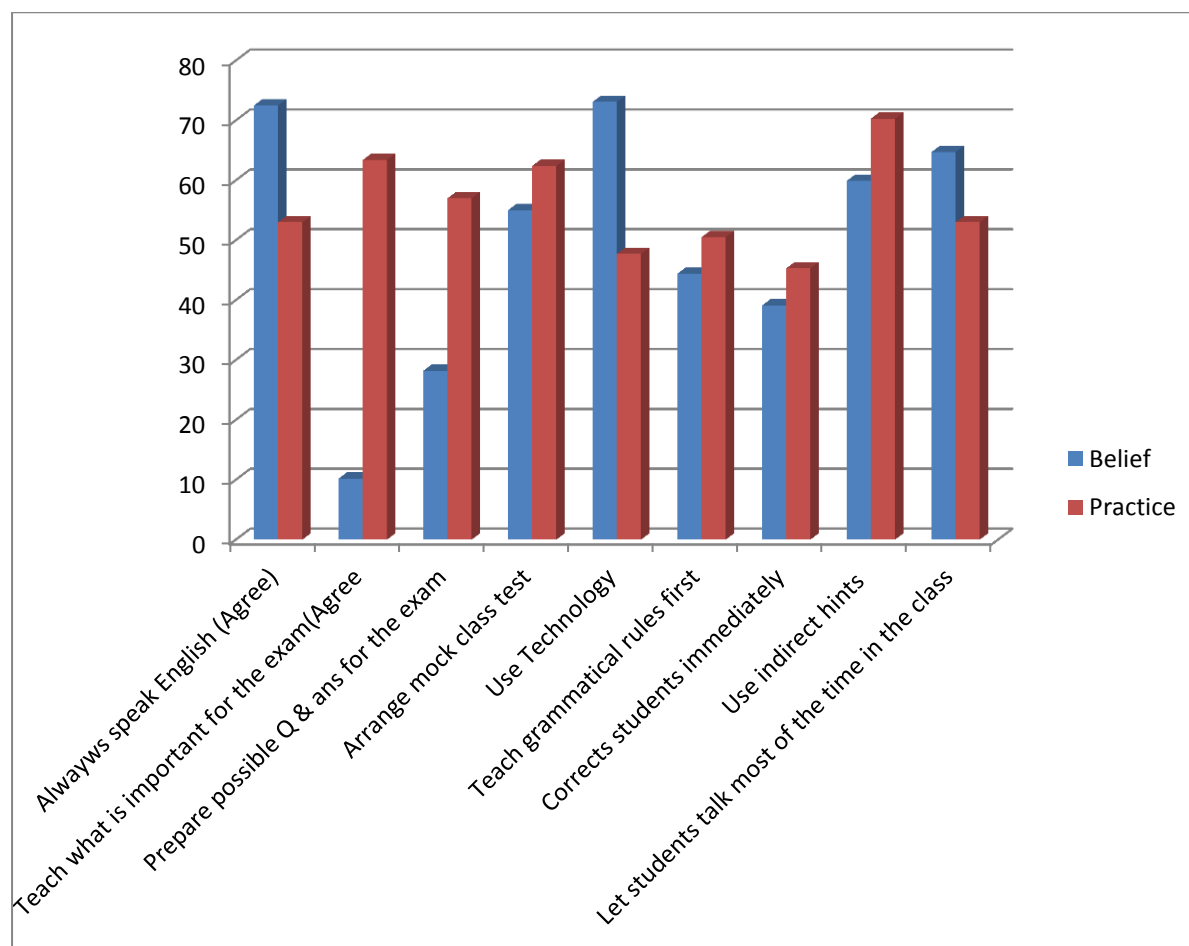
for a majority of the components there was a clear disparity between what teachers, as a group, believed about effective teaching in English and how they reported their classroom practices. For example, while more than 70% of the respondents agreed that an effective teacher should always speak English in the class, only 53 % of the teachers reported that they always speak English in the classroom.

In order to directly compare discrepancies between teachers' beliefs and reported practices *strongly agree* and *agree* responses were collated as *positive* responses. Similarly *strongly disagree* and *disagree* responses were collated as *negative* responses.

In regards to *teaching for the test*, there was discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and their reported practices. Although a majority of the participating teachers reported that teaching for the test without focusing on developing students' language skills should not be the characteristics of a good English teacher in the Bangladesh context, their reported practice showed that they generally taught for the test. For example, while 81% of the teachers perceived that an effective English teacher should not teach only what is important for the final examination and 63% of the teachers agreed that an effective teacher should not prepare possible questions and answer for the final examination, in their reports of their practice 57% of the participants agreed that they prepared possible questions and answer for the final examination. There were expectations from different parties, including school authority, students, and parents, to teach in the way that would ensure students' good grades in the examination. While more than 70% of the teachers agreed that an effective English teacher should use technology in class, only 45% reported that they use technology in class.

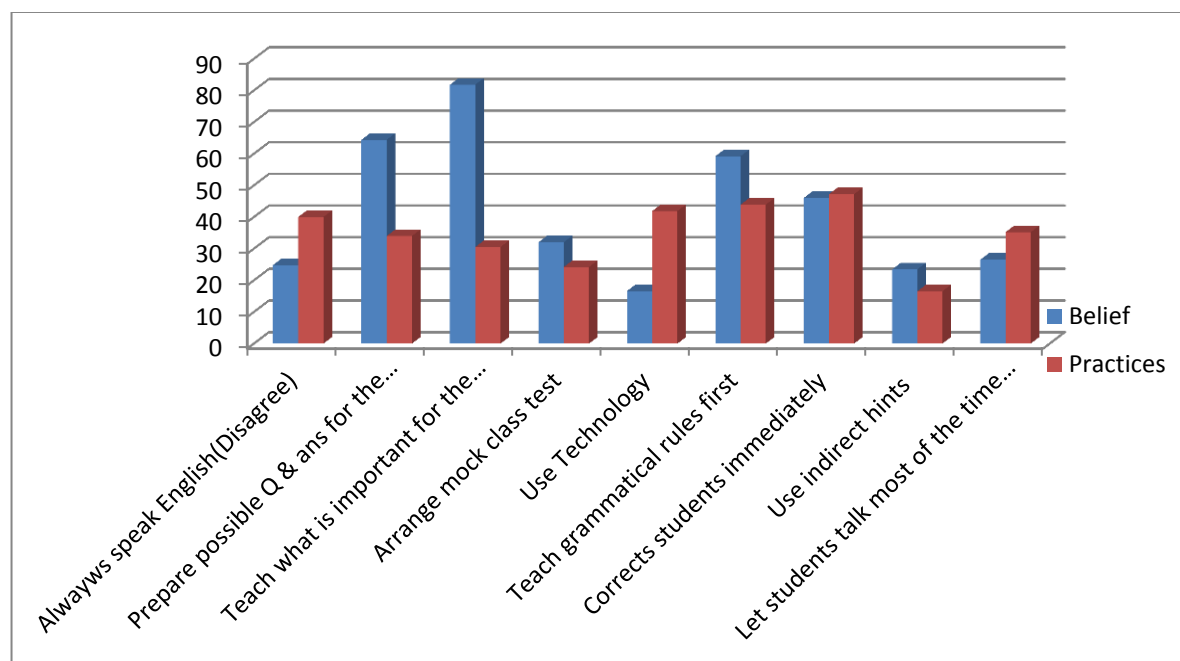
There was also a discrepancy between beliefs and practices around placing equal importance in teaching across written and oral language. In the reports of practice it was apparent that they teach reading and writing more often than listening and speaking despite generally believing in placing equal importance across these areas (see figure x) Thus a question is raised about the extent to which the communicative language teaching approach which is widely accepted at policy level as the best language teaching methodology to teach English at the secondary level in Bangladesh is appropriate in Bangladesh and whether it is feasible to implement the policy.

The figure 3.2 utilises the collation of *strongly agree* and *agree* responses as *positive* responses to show the difference between belief and reported practice.



**Figure 3.2 Comparison between positive (strongly agree and agree) responses**

The figure 3.3 utilises the collation of *strongly disagree* and *disagree* responses as *negative* responses to show the difference between belief and reported practice.



**Figure 3.3 Comparison between negative (strongly disagree and disagree) responses**

## Further discussions about selected aspects of the survey

### *Qualifications, experience and training*

From the data presented in figure 3.2 it is apparent that oral English proficiency, having relevant qualifications, being well conversant in English grammar, having teaching experience, and having students who are successful in the examination were rated highly as the qualities of an effective English teacher in a Bangladesh secondary school.

Of the respondents 22% of the teachers had more than ten years of experiences and 20% of the teachers had 6-10 years teaching experiences (figure 1). Thus the responses came from relatively experienced teachers. Their own experience may have weighted their assessment, and it would be interesting if a survey of more inexperienced teachers would produce the same results.



Sixty percent of the respondents had an MA degree which is significantly higher than the national level. The BANBEIS (2015) database showed that over half of the English teachers teaching English in secondary level in Bangladesh have only a B.A (pass) degree. There are teachers teaching English who have a bachelor degree without any component of English and there are even teachers who work as English teachers who have only Higher Secondary School certificate (H.S.C) (BANBEIS, 2015). Thus there seems to be a considerable difference between the teachers' reported beliefs about required qualifications for effective English teachers and the qualifications of English teachers found in BANBEIS database.

Thus it seems worthwhile to examine further whether the existing required formal qualifications to become a secondary English teacher equip teachers to teach effectively at the secondary level. Are they acquiring enough subject matter knowledge as well as knowledge about teaching and learning before starting their careers as a secondary school teachers? Is it important to receive training before starting a teaching career? There also seems to be need to investigate the best way to support those who are already in the English teaching profession at the secondary level who may be found to be struggling with the new curriculum expectations. Should the completion of a teaching related degree be a prerequisite to entering the teaching position at the secondary level? Is it possible for a teacher with just one subject of English in their bachelor degree to teach in a way that follows the CLT approach mandated by policy? What can be done with the teachers who have not studied English at tertiary level at all? These questions, and others that arose subsequently prompted me to further examine training processes and these are reported in Chapter Six.

### ***English curriculum***

While the curriculum's aims, goals and objectives are noble, it is worthwhile to further examine to what extent these aims, goals and objectives are attainable and practical, considering the contextual barriers that hinder the implementation of the curriculum. Some of these barriers are related to the current level of teachers' competencies and some of them are related to other contextual barriers such as large classes, short duration of classes, resources and, above all, the examination oriented culture.

Although participants' responses showed a positive attitude to the English curriculum it is necessary to also inquire how many of them had actually read the curriculum documents and how many of them would know how to locate the curriculum documents. What is the responsibility, and the practice, of schools in terms of providing curriculum to the teachers? In the survey a majority of the participants indicated that the present curriculum is suitable for Bangladesh and it focuses on all four skills. On the other hand, an experienced teacher educator, Podder (2013), criticised the curriculum for not having any provision to assess speaking and listening skills in the national examinations and emphasised the need to reform the curriculum. These questions suggest that while the survey results reported in this chapter offer useful indications of teacher's attitudes and perceptions, more investigation is required of what actually happens in the field, and that this investigation needs to capture the experiences, aspirations and frustrations of teachers and students as well as reporting practices.

### ***Classroom language***

Although more than half of the participating teachers reported that they used English as a medium of classroom instruction, but notably only 16% strongly agreed that they did so. As already mentioned, more than half of the respondents were attending teaching training in communicative language teaching while they were completing the survey, and their current environment may well have influenced their responses. Further examination seems needed to explore to what extent teachers in Bangladeshi secondary schools do use English as the medium of instruction especially in the rural areas. It would also be useful to explore the role of training in shaping teachers' beliefs regarding using English as the medium of instruction and whether the beliefs shaped in training translate into practice in both rural and urban areas. It might be also important to examine whether English teachers at the secondary level who are capable of conducting classes in English feel it is appropriate to conduct classes in English.

### ***Teaching aids and materials***

A majority of the respondent indicated that an effective teacher would use authentic materials and range of technologies and a smaller group, but still almost a majority, reported they did so in practice. However, my survey had not asked them to detail to what aids and technologies they use and how often.

One of the characteristics of communicative language teaching is that it uses authentic materials (Richards, 2001; Larsen- Freeman, 2011). However there is a debate regarding what are authentic materials in an English classroom and what the actual roles of such materials should be in CLT. Richards (2001) argued for the extensive inclusion of authentic materials in the communicative language teaching. He explained that by authentic materials he indicates text, pictures, realia, audio and video materials. He also suggested selecting materials from real life. The curriculum for the secondary level also encourages teachers to use different interactive activities and provides a guideline of suggested activities. Examples include poster presentations, postcards, wall magazines, project work, making charts with similarities and dissimilarities, making real a CV and job application, debates, short speeches, using of audio tapes or CDs and real announcements from television, radio, using timetables from the airport, and bus and train stations ( The Secondary English curriculum, 2012). But before using such authentic materials a teacher would needs to spend a good amount of time to collect and plan to use different authentic materials in the English class.

Teaching English in Bangladesh is divided into two sections as there are two papers of English at the examination at secondary and higher secondary levels. In the first paper, students need to answer comprehensive questions based on reading passages, true/false questions, vocabulary tests, and write a dialogue. In the second paper, students need to answer questions related to grammar and writing composition, including a paragraph, a letter, an application and an email. In the secondary school English classes are also divided in this pattern. For example, if there are six classes in a week, three are for the first paper and three are for the second paper.

Therefore the division in the examination prompts teachers to teach language skills separately. It would require further in-depth investigation to see what kind of authentic materials and teaching aids teachers actually use, and how much practical scope exists

within the allocated class time to use the kinds of authentic materials and teaching aids suggested by the curriculum and advocated in communicative language teaching.

### ***Teaching for the test***

Participating teachers agreed that they felt pressure from various parties to teach according to the test format. These include pressure from principal, students' parents and also students who wanted their teacher to teach what was more likely to be important for the examination.

It is generally argued that the present S.S.C and H.S.C examinations are not aligned with the curriculum. These examinations only assess reading and writing and the two other language skills, speaking and listening, are not assessed in the examination (Das , Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman & Khan, 2014; Khan, 2010; Maniruzzaman & Haque, 2010). There are also claims that these examinations encourage rote learning and memorisation (Asian Development Bank, 2015; Hossain, 2009). The writing topics and reading exercises are relatively predictable and students tend to memorise sample answers. Although there is a policy provision to assess students' speaking and listening skills through continuous assessment in the classroom and then to add those marks to the year-end final examination, speaking and listening are not assessed in the S.S.C and H.S.C examination. It is often the case that these two skills are also overlooked by the students and teachers.

On the other hand because of the importance attached to the results of S.S.C and H.S.C examination, students and teachers are more concerned with what leads students to score well in the examination. So teaching and learning are driven by a hidden syllabus different from the existing curriculum and syllabus. Thus it is necessary to ask if the existing assessment system is aligned with the curriculum. Is it possible to implement the curriculum despite the existing assessment? Are teachers forced to only teach to the test, and teach test taking strategies, or are they able to be concerned about teaching language skills as well? From the responses summarised in Table 3.5 it is apparent that the examination does indeed influence teachers' teaching although this survey does not provide any details of the nature of impact. Therefore it is important to explore further

the nature of the impact that examinations exert on teaching and learning in the English classrooms in Bangladesh.

### ***Preferred teaching methods and activities***

Since the adoption of a communicative curriculum for language teaching in secondary schools and the subsequent introduction of communicative approach based textbooks in each class level, teachers have been encouraged to teach interactively. Initiatives have been taken to train teachers in the principles of communicative language teaching and to use various kinds of interactive activities that would allow learners to practice using the language communicatively. Some of the activities suggested in curriculum documents are role play, group work, discussion, pair work, simulation of given situations, listening to stories, information gap activities, oral presentations, chain drills, word competitions and vocabulary games (National Curriculum, 2012). It would be worthwhile to further examine to what extent these kinds of activities are being used in secondary school English classrooms in order to emphasise all four skills. Given the situation that in the high stake examinations like S.S.C and H.S.C only students' reading and writing are assessed and there is no speaking and listening test in the S.S.C and H.S.C test, how practical is it for a teacher to focus on activities that are more suited to speaking and listening than reading and writing? The NCTB prescribed textbooks were designed so that in every lesson different skills could be practiced. To what extent can teachers follow the textbook when most of the students are reluctant to study lessons that are not so important for the examination? It is noteworthy that almost 90% of the teachers in the survey believed that speaking and listening should be included in the national examination.

### ***Teaching Grammar***

An active debate in Bangladesh involved how much attention should be paid to the role of grammar at the secondary and higher secondary level. How much grammar should be taught? And which aspects of grammar do students need to master? One of the aims of reforming the English curriculum and of the introduction of communicative language teaching and new English textbook was that students would not learn grammatical rules in isolation and through translation; rather they would become competent in all four language skills and they be able to use English in real life situations. However, grammar has been reintroduced and at the current time various grammar items are being assessed in the national examinations. So it might be interesting to explore how grammar is taught in classrooms and whether students perceive the learning of grammar as important.

### **Analysis of barriers**

The results from the survey analysis showed that the participating teachers' beliefs about effective English teaching accorded, to a great extent, with the literature on effective teaching. However discrepancies existed between their beliefs and reported practices. There was a section towards the end of the survey where participants were asked to list up to three barriers that they thought stood against effective English teaching in Bangladesh. I analysed these thematically. Some of them related to teachers' own competencies and skills, some to institutions' facilities and organisation, some to government policies and actions, and to students.

In the following table I have listed the barriers that teachers mentioned most frequently, grouping them into the four categories stated above.

Barriers relating to teachers' own competencies and skills	Barriers relating to institutions' facilities and organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers without English qualifications,</li> <li>• Lack of trained teachers,</li> <li>• Lack of understanding of CLT,</li> <li>• Failure to use of the prescribed textbook <i>English for Today</i></li> <li>• Over reliance of the notebook and guidebook</li> <li>• Teachers' dishonest practice like forcing students to come for private tuition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratio of students to teacher is too high</li> <li>• Lack of facilities</li> <li>• Lack of IT support</li> <li>• No multimedia equipment</li> <li>• Traditional thinking and mentality of the head teacher</li> <li>• No or disrupted electricity supply</li> <li>• Excessive teaching load and too many administrative duties</li> <li>• Lack of English environment in the school and outside school</li> </ul>
Barriers relating to government policies and actions	Barriers relating to students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' low salary</li> <li>• Appointments of unqualified teachers</li> <li>• Meritorious students are not willing to come to teaching profession at the secondary school</li> <li>• Lack of training opportunities</li> <li>• Inadequate facilities in the rural areas</li> <li>• Faulty examination system</li> <li>• Dishonest tendency to increase the results of the examination</li> <li>• No speaking and listening test in the S.S.C and H.S.C examination</li> <li>• Frequent changes of syllabus and curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the rural areas students are shy and they do not like to talk</li> <li>• Fear of English</li> <li>• Some students are not motivated to develop their English skills</li> <li>• Poor family background</li> <li>• Many students cannot buy necessary study materials.'</li> <li>• Students sometimes need to work to help their family economically,</li> <li>• Absenteeism from school,</li> </ul>

**Figure: 3.4 Most frequently mentioned barriers to effective teaching**

The results that came from analysis of the survey, including the factors that participants cited as getting in the way of effective English teaching, called for more in-depth investigation.

One factor that was widely cited as a problem was the examination system and its impact on teaching and learning. There are suggestions that both teachers and students feel the pressure to achieve examination success and that the actions of both are strongly influenced by what is thought necessary to achieve that success. There was suggestion

that, although other aspects of language learning were acknowledged to be important, only what was likely to be examined was often taught. Identification of this factor led to the investigation reported in Chapter Four.

Another issue that gave rise to strong comment was the current practice of communicative language teaching (CLT), and its suitability for Bangladesh secondary schools. Therefore, I considered it necessary to explore the factors that give rise to the need for communicative skills and to explore how teachers and students regard communicative competencies. That exploration is reported in Chapter Five.

The third issue that required further investigation was English teachers' capacity to teach English. Lack of qualified and trained teachers were mentioned by a good number of respondents as barriers against effective English teaching. I decided to examine what training (pre- and in-service) did exist and how this was perceived and utilised by teachers in their actual practice. That examination is reported in Chapter Six.

A further issue that seemed to require more investigation was the disparity between urban and rural areas. Participants highlighted various barriers to their effective teaching, such as the poor family background of some students, illiterate parents, and no electricity in schools. These seemed to be more than isolated problems, they probably related to the socio-economic conditions of the country as a whole. Therefore I decided to explore the urban-rural divide further, and that exploration is reported in Chapter Seven.

In summary, I found that much of the respondents' report of their beliefs aligned with my view of effective teachers within the Bangladeshi context based on review of the literature, but their reports of practice did not match. This analysis prompted me to explore factors that may prohibit or enable effective teaching within the context. Perhaps the provision of professional development was a key factor in shaping this group's beliefs. However, the gap between their beliefs and practice indicates that simply having the *correct* beliefs about teaching English is not enough to change practice. The following chapters explore the embedded contextual factors that impact on practice.



## **Chapter Four: The influence of the examination system on teaching and learning**

This chapter focuses on the examinations in Bangladesh secondary schools and their intended or unintended impact on students, teachers, parents and on the society. It starts with the two students' stories and then proceeds to examine the roles and importance of high stake national examinations, like Secondary school certificate (S.S.C) and Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C), and their impact. I then analyse the S.S.C examination's structure and question patterns, and the limitation of the high stake examinations in Bangladesh to examine what these tests are intended to assess. In the later part of the chapter I present several secondary English teachers' teaching stories highlighting how, despite shortcomings in the examination, there are teachers who strive to teach to a rich curriculum. Then I examine related literature and discuss how the themes in the literature relate to the experiences of the teachers and students who I interviewed. Finally I draw together a number of themes that emerge.

### ***Priya's story***

Priya was a Class X student who studied in her village school. The school where she studied, a village secondary school, was a two-storied building. A further tin-shed house was used for academic and administrative purposes. There was a big playground in front of the school. It was in one of the villages that was *developed* in the district, at least in terms of economy. The village was near an important city, Rupnagar, which was a famous business place in the country; one of the largest power plants of Bangladesh and a fertiliser company were not far from the village. Because of these establishments and good communication system by road, river and rail it was one of the potential business areas, it was a village in which the people were comparatively economically well off. Across the school ground there was access to the village and the community. Although the school was in a village, it was situated just beside the Dhaka- Sylhet highway, a main national highway. There was no boundary wall to prevent outsiders' access to the school.

Priya's father was a technician who lived and worked in the Middle East and her mother was a housewife. Her parents, although not so well educated, had an ardent desire that their children should study and be educated. Priya's mother informed me that her father would regularly phone and ask her to study well at home and to go to the private tuition as well. He was ready to give sufficient money for that.

Priya was expecting to take the S.S.C examination in the next year. She was trying her best to succeed in the examination and she was aware of its importance. While other members of the family spent time watching various programmes on television, she would concentrate on her study. Her parents also realised the importance of the examination, probably the most important in their daughter's life. She was regular in attending the classes at school and she attended private tuition early in the morning and in the late afternoon. Early in the morning she would go to a private tutor to study English. The teacher, a final year Bachelor student of English taught at her home for some income. Priya regularly carried with her the *Nobodut Guide*, a guide book that the teacher would use to teach in the private tuition. She studied with twelve other students from the same school in that private tuition. She also attended coaching classes in the school that took place after school time.

I asked her why she took this book to the school and to her private tuition. The book, bought a year and half ago, seemed quite old and the pages were torn. It gave an impression of being well used, at least more than some of her other books. "We study from this book" she replied. Her other friends in the private tuition group had the same book. She added: "Our teacher teaches from this book in the classroom and in the coaching he teaches us from this book." She showed me some photocopied papers what she called *sheets* that she had collected from her private tutor and from her school English teacher. In the sheets there were some sample compositions, paragraphs, email, formal and informal letters. There were some sheets about grammatical rules and some exercises with answers. Her sheets seemed quite worn and I had the impression that she studied them quite often. I asked her: "Where is your English textbook?" For a moment she looked puzzled as if not sure which book I was talking about. "Oh the main book," she said, and started looking here and there for the book. Suddenly she seemed to remember and showed it to me. It was locked in one of the drawers of her table. She showed me

another grammar book that she got from the school along with the textbook. The book seemed new and I had the impression that she did not study this book at all.

“Why are they locked? Don’t you study these books?” I asked her. Her clear and straight forward “No” puzzled me. She explained that in her class the teacher had never taught this book. She added that the teacher said that there would not be anything from this book in the examination. “From the beginning of the school,” she said, “our teacher suggested the *Nobodut guide* and there are many model tests in the book. Our teacher selects which one will be important and teaches us accordingly.”

I kept contact with her and asked her about her preparation for the S.S.C examination. After her test examination, which is the school year final examination for S.S.C candidates, she showed me a test paper which was a compilation of various schools’ test examination questions. Usually a test paper is very demanding as it gives students a chance to see the types of questions that they will encounter in the final examination. Usually the final examination takes place two to three months after the test examination in the school. In this time students take intensive preparation for the examination, sometimes attending coaching centres for model tests. She informed me that she would concentrate more on the subjects in which she thought she had weakness in that period. There would be some model tests in her school coaching centre after the test examination and she would attend those model tests.

Priya’s story emphasises the perceived importance of the national examination. Priya’s dedication to her study and her parents’ willingness to invest in her education are typical of many students and families throughout Bangladesh. It highlights the role of the coaching centres and after hour tuition, the perceived importance of guidebooks and notebooks, rote learning and the role of examination in shaping teaching and learning at the secondary level in Bangladesh.

### ***Eva's story***

Eva was a Class VIII student of Bikoshito Pilot High School, situated in a small town. She was a 13 year old girl who seemed to have more interest in arts and painting than more formal studies. She showed me some of her drawing and almost in every blank page of her books she had drawn something. Her drawings showed her good sense of observation. She had interest in sports as well. She was a member of her school's badminton, cricket and handball teams and was a lead member of her school teams. She seemed reluctant to memorise and her understanding of science subjects including maths seemed comparatively better than her work in English. English was one of the subjects she was really worried about, and so were her parents. Her brother, a higher secondary student who got GPA 5 in his S.S.C examination, was a relatively good student, good enough to teach her different subjects including English. But she did not seem interested to take help from her elder brother. Instead she preferred to go to private tuition to study. She liked to go to the school, liked to meet her friend but did not seem to attend the classes.

She normally woke up early in the morning and then after a little preparation and breakfast she went for private tuition. This was her English private tuition at one of her school English teachers' home. From there she sometimes went to the school, but most of the time she came home after the private class and stayed to study at home. Her father was a lecturer of mathematics at a college and he helped her in maths and other science subjects. In addition there was a private tutor who came to her house in the evening to teach her all the subjects. English was one of the subjects she was not very good at. She had her guidebook and some sheets of paragraphs, compositions, essay and letters that were important for the examination that she had collected from her private tutor.

I asked her, "Why you don't go to the school regularly?" She told me that she went occasionally but classes were not held regularly. Sometimes in one class there were more than 100 students and there were no places to sit in the class. There would be coaching classes soon for the Junior School Certificate (J.S.C) candidate and she acknowledged she had to attend those classes regularly.

Towards the end of the year she appeared in the school test examination. She successfully passed the test examination and that ensured that she could sit in the J.S.C examination.

Her attention to her study increased dramatically. She cut out her time watching television and instead she started spending more time studying.

After the examination I looked at her questions and asked “How was the exam? Was it very difficult for you? How did you perform?” Looking at both her question papers I had a feeling that the question papers and especially the grammar section were too difficult for the age level. The reading comprehension passage was from the *English for Today* textbook that she had studied before, but the questions that followed the passage (true/false, multiple choice questions, short answers, fill in the blanks) were new to her. I asked her some of the meanings but she could hardly tell me anything. Then I looked at some of the inscriptions she had made on her question paper. In fact many of them were correct answers. I wondered how she found the correct answer when she had difficulty in understanding the question paper.

She was smiling and said to me “I answered everything. I knew that.” Then after a few minutes she added smilingly that her school teacher had come into her examination room and written answers for some of the questions on the board.

However, attending the public examination did bring new experience. She had to take her examination in a different school other than where she studied. Some of the students attending in the same examination centre came from villages and some of them had left home at least two hours before the examination. Some of the students had to find out temporary accommodation in the small town to attend in the examination as it was not possible to come from their village home and reach the centre before the examination in the morning. She was afraid on the first day when she saw police guarding the gate of the examination centre. “I have never seen police from such a close distance,” she said. “I thought if we do something wrong they will take us to the police station.”

In one of the examinations at the examination centre she suddenly fainted. The hall superintendent immediately called the local hospital, which was not far from the examination centre. The medical officer came and gave her some medication. Gradually she felt better. Her mother rushed to the centre. Once she felt better she was given extra time by special arrangement to complete her examination and her mother was allowed to be there during that period.

Before the results were published I visited her home several times. I noticed her anxiousness. She was not interested at all to go anywhere, although it was a common practice for students to go to relatives' houses, especially to *Nanabari* (maternal uncle's house) when the examination was over. The day the results were published I noticed how worried she was, and detached from all kinds of enjoyment. On the day she confined herself in a room from the morning. She did not go to her school to learn the result; instead her father and her elder brother went. They had been trying to find out from the internet since noon. At last the good news came that she had got an overall A in the examination (including an A in English), a result she was not expecting at all. It was more than she had dreamed of. There was delight and joy everywhere, and in no time all her relatives and friends were informed of her results over the phone.

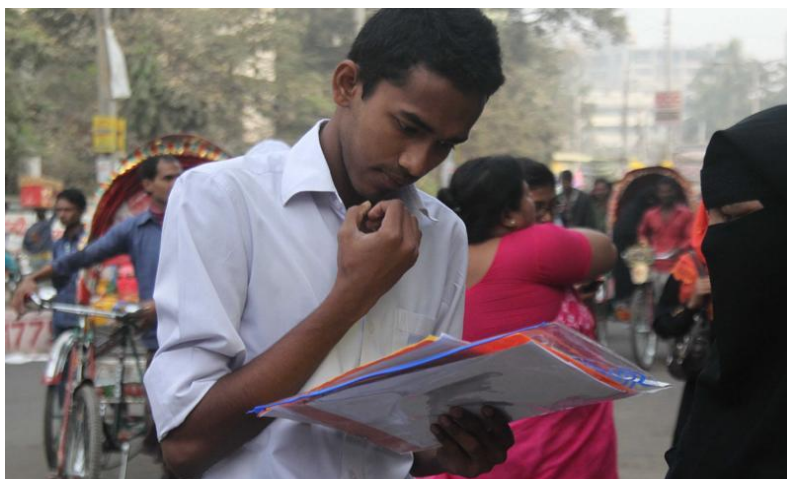
Following her success in the examination she determined to study hard in the next class. She had a new class, a new dress, a chance to study in the science stream in fact she had all the enthusiasm for a fresh start. Sweets were distributed to celebrate her success along with a gift from her father and other relatives. She told her father that from the beginning of the year she has to go to Mr Rahman for private tuition. "Everyone from my class will attend private tuition to Mr Rahman Sir," she said. "If I don't go he will not let me pass in the examination. If I want to pass in the examination I have to attend private tuition at his house".

Eva's story highlights the burden national examination exerts even at the early age and the fear of examination among young children in Bangladesh. It also indicates the politicisation of the examination results by which the pass percentages from the school are increased by any means and the government is shown to be successful as well. It reveals the preference for private tuition and coaching centres when a school fails to provide adequate support and fails to hold students in the classroom. The story highlights how examinations have far reaching consequences. Those who are successful celebrate with everyone but failure in the examination may cause severe difficulties for a candidate. There are instances when failing to pass in the examination sometimes put an end to student's academic life. If in the national examinations, like S.S.C and H.S.C, students need second chance to pass the examination, it is mentioned in their academic transcripts as *irregular* which is often has negative impact in their future career.

The stories of Priya and Eva give a picture of the importance and dominance of examinations in Bangladesh secondary education. The stories also show how important guidebooks, notebooks, model test, coaching centres and private tuitions are to students and parents. From a young age students prepare themselves for the high stake examinations. We need to ask if we are giving these young mind opportunity to study in a free environment where they will have the chance to develop their latent talents and creativity, as our present Bangladesh education policy states they should, or if they are so overburdened with the examination that they have learnt nothing except how to cross the hurdles of examinations.

### **Importance of the public examination results in Bangladesh**

As Priya's and Eva's stories highlight, examination results have major personal and public impact. The following photographs illustrate aspects of the impact.



A last minutes glance in the possible answers before the examination



A celebration by a highly successful college after the publication of examination results



A procession of a rural school to celebrate the success of its students in the Primary School Certificate and Junior School Certificate.

**Figure 4.1: The impact of examination results**

The montage of the images above shows the importance of the examination results in Bangladesh. In the first image a student revising important points at the examination hall gate just before the start of the examination. In the second image teacher is at the front of their successful students, are celebrating success in the examination. The success is seen as belonging to the school as well as to individual students. Their jubilant celebration and their display of the victory sign (V) highlight how important the results are to students, teachers, institutions and parents. In the third image garlands adorn the successful students. The whole school joins them, with the head teacher leading the procession that goes throughout the village.

Both S.S.C & H.S.C examination results are very significant for students' future lives. Because there is no admission test for college admission, students' opportunity to attend good colleges depends on their S.S.C results. As is detailed further in this chapter most of the teachers interviewed discussed the influence of the S.S.C and the H.S.C results for higher education and future careers.

The results of the S.S.C & H.S.C are very important for the reputation of schools and colleges as well. Schools and colleges have been ranked, based on the results of the national examination (e.g Prothom Alo, 2015a) although this formal ranking has recently been discontinued. Some of the schools and colleges are very famous and gaining a place in those schools is very challenging because students from those schools achieve more



GPA 5s. In the current context examination results are paramount for both students and parents. Thus the founder of the school, teachers, parents and students all want to see students getting 'A+' in the examination. Shopan, an English teacher in a private school commented:

I always keep in mind and teach my students so that they will get good marks in the examination. But there are teachers, even in my institution, who are always concerned about examination and nothing else. They do not teach the prescribed textbooks in the class as they believe some other guidebooks provide more exercise for the examination. They always ask students to practice those guidebooks and anything they consider not so important for the examination, they will not be interested to study.

Kamrul Hasan, a deputy principal of a well reputed institution explained to me how good results in the S.S.C and H.S.C examination make his institution famous:

This institution is a relatively new, founded by a famous businessperson. Within a few years of its establishment we were among the top institutions in terms of results on the board. Our success was reported in the newspaper and media and since then we received a huge number of application for admission. As a result now we have the luxury to choose students. Because we are a private institution we charge relatively high monthly tuition fees, but still students want to study in our institution. At present we have students in our institutions from thirty seven districts of Bangladesh.

Parents give maximum priority to their children's examination results. Sajedur Rahman, a primary school teacher, described his efforts to help her daughter, Bushrah, before her J.S.C examination.

During her J.S.C examination time I took holidays from my job to help my daughter's preparation for the examination. For example, if she was memorising an answer I would ask her to say it from her memory and I matched it with the book from where she learnt it. If she wrote an answer I then checked that and it matched with the book and also looked if there were any spelling mistakes.

During her examination days I took her to the examination centre. Then I waited outside while she was attending the examination. When the examination was finished first thing I checked while returning home was whether the questions were what she expected. Returning home she checked different multiple choice or true false answers with the book. Then on the day of the publication of the result I went to her school in the morning and like other parents I waited in the school and tried to get her result from the Ministry of Education's website, but on that day the website did not work as the load was too much.

The importance of the result is very evident from students' and parents' reactions after the publication of results. Those who get their desired result and especially those get GPA 5 burst into cries of joy. There is celebration, distribution of sweets among relatives, friends and teachers, and exchanges of gifts. On the other hand those who fail to obtain the desired result plunge into depression, often receiving derogatory comments from the parents. For some parents it is a matter of shame. There have been several reports in the newspaper of students who commit suicide after the publication of the results (Prothom Alo, 2015,b; The Dhaka Tribune, 2017). In one instance a student committed suicide jumping from a six storied building after finding that he had failed in the S.S.C examination. When the script was re-examined it was found that he passed with good grades, the error in result was due to head examiner mistakes in assessing script (The Daily Star, 2016)

In the school and sometimes even in the student's family special prayers called *Milad* are offered for the candidate. Eva, Priya and Bushrah all mentioned their school *Milad* held just few days before their examination. Another candidate mentioned that his parents went to a famous *pir*, a religious priest, to ask for prayers for their child.

The prestige and disgrace associated with good and poor results respectively cause students' anxiety levels to peak. In addition, in many cases the expectation of grades impacts on how much attention teachers give to various students. Often it is only the high achieving students who get attention from the teachers in class; neglect of low achieving students widens existing achievement gaps.

However, not all the teachers I interviewed believed that good examinations results were a sufficient goal. For example, Shafiqur Rahman, an English teacher in a rural secondary

school, identified the results as important, but added that they are not enough to obtain employment. In the current environment, he explained, those who are good at English, especially in English speaking, have more chance of success in their career.

### **Teaching for the examination; narrowing the curriculum**

A range of different sectors concentrate their activities around the examination. Students attend tuition classes and rote learn model answers. There is flourishing publication of new examination-related guidebooks and notebooks. Schools and coaching centres drill examination questions and answers, and arrange model tests.

Teachers feel pressure to teach according to what they believe will appear in the S.S.C and H.S.C examinations as high stake test results are very important for a student's subsequent higher studies and job opportunities (Choudhury, 2010; Maniruzzaman & Hoque, 2010). Research by Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman and Khan (2014) identifies how the existing assessment system drives students to memorise answers, and points out that even though there have been reviews of the examination format since the introduction of the CLT based curriculum, a significant gap still exists between what is intended to be taught and what is tested in the examination.

Some of the teachers I interviewed claimed that they try to teach all the chapters in the textbooks. However, they acknowledged that when the examination gets closer they focus on what is more important for the examination. A good number of teachers interviewed mentioned that it is not possible to teach all the chapters within the time they have. They identified some chapters as unnecessary for the examination since they do not have passages that are likely to be used for comprehension tests.

One teacher mentioned that comparatively weaker students skip some chapters and try to read only what is important for the test, but brighter students cover all the chapters of the books and they read other books to improve their English skills.

In contrast to the textbook, examination papers from past years were seen by teachers to be essential. In my interviews many teachers stressed the importance of past examination papers, explaining these give a clear idea about the format and content of the test. Local publishers collect all the examination papers from various schools just after the test

examination and they also include the past year's examination papers. These collections are eagerly sought by almost all candidates. Comments by teachers included:

If any students solved the test questions of various schools and the past examination questions, I think they would definitely pass the examination. I follow past examination papers and the test examination papers of different schools while I teach students.

I think it is helpful to get an idea about the question patterns of the final examination. It helps me to decide what is more important for the final examination. I suggest students solve past examination papers as much as possible. The more students will do this, the better they will do in the final examination.

After the test examination, which is the school final examination for those who intend to sit S.S.C and H.S.C, students take intensive preparation for the national examination. The school arranges special coaching classes for candidates in the gap period. Students also attend coaching centres outside the school. In the coaching centres and in the school emphasis is given to solving various question papers from highly reputed schools. From my observation I saw that one school created a formal schedule of solving different schools' test questions. I also observed in another coaching centre how the teacher compiled answers for various questions and made a summary sheet for his students.

A mock test, which is also known as a model *test* in Bangladesh, is very popular and students are keen to undertake the model test. Most of the interviewed teachers believed that model tests are very important and helpful for the final examination. Their comments included:

When the examination is nearer I give more emphasis on mock tests similar to S.S.C examination format in type and length. It helps students much, especially to practice for a three hours examination.

I encourage students to take model tests and I arrange a model test just before the final examination. This test gives students an idea about the nature of the examination. It familiarizes them with the examination format. Students get an idea about what they have studied, and what they need to study.

Mock tests help students to practice doing an examination for three hours at a time. It helps students to learn how to manage their time for the examination and it helps to reduce stress about the examination.

I have been teaching for many years and from my experience I can say it really helps students to get good marks in the examination. Many students cannot gain good results because they cannot manage their time.

### **Secondary English curriculum and examinations**

The English curriculum for the secondary level states the following as its first two objectives:

1. To help students develop competence in all four language skills, i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing.
2. To help students use the competence for effective communication in real life situations.

It further proposes that students will be able to “describe people and places, follow instructions, directions, requests, announcements and respond accordingly in social situations”, that they will be able to “narrate incidents in logical situations, ask for and give permission/suggestions, participate in conversations, discussions and debates”, and that they will also be able to “recognise and use English sounds, stress, and intonation appropriately while listening and speaking”(National Curriculum, 2012).

There is need to question the extent to which these curriculum goals are being achieved and to examine how the existing format of examinations can assess such outcomes. Feedback from teachers, detailed in this and the following chapter, do not indicate that the examination is assessing all four competencies of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Nor is there provision in the examination to assess if students can use these competences in real life situations. There is scope to assess some of the competencies, for example reading and writing. But when the examination topics for writing are easily predictable, then the examination assesses students’ memorisation skills rather than their ability to communicate. The examination does not assess if students can follow instructions, commands, requests, announcements, and if they can then act accordingly.

Nor does it assess whether students are attaining the skills of interacting through short talks, simple dialogues, conversations and discussions. And because these curriculum goals are not assessed in the examination, they tend to not receive attention in schools.

It is also important to consider the harmful effect of examination and how they are sometimes used as a weapon. Because of the high importance attached in the examination, good results seem imperative. As, reported above, there are instances when students who fail to score well in the examination commit suicide. Why does a girl like Eva who is an active member of her sports team faint in the examination hall? And why does she realise just after the result the importance of attending private tuition at her teacher's home? There are some instances when teachers compel students to come to their home, or to their coaching centre, for private tuition. Many students attend believing that if they do not go for private tuition to particular teacher, they will not get good marks in the examination. Perhaps they will not be allowed to pass and be promoted to next class. Perhaps they will not be allowed to sit for the examination.

However the government has taken strong initiatives to ban these kinds of coaching. A law which is drafted and put in the ministry's website (Rashid, 2016, Apr 11 ) for consultation suggests the possibility of imprisonment and fines for running coaching centres, publishing guidebooks and notebooks, and teachers who involved in private tuition. Nevertheless, coaching, guidebooks and notebooks, test papers and model tests are very popular with students and teachers. The reality is that students and teachers see immediate benefits in them. Their popularity also suggests the ineffectiveness of our school system. The schools are failing to offer adequate service and so after school coaching seems inevitable.

When so much importance is attached to the examination results it is not surprising to see that students, parents, teachers and schools will do things that ensure good results in the examinations. Anything that is not relevant to examination will not be so easy to bring into practice. This is not only visible in Bangladesh; a number of researchers like Ferman (2004) and Shohamy (2001) in Israel, Qi (2007) in China, Andrews, Fullilove and Wong (2002) in Hong Kong, Watanabe (2004) in Japan reported similar trends. Thus it is impractical to assume that students and teachers will pay equal importance to all four

languages of English in the English classes in Bangladesh secondary school classroom when only reading and writing are necessary for the examination.

### **Testing at Secondary and Higher secondary levels for English**

Students at secondary and higher secondary levels are assessed based on the quarterly, half yearly, and year-end final examinations. At secondary level, from Class VI to IX, the prime objective of the testing is decide whether or not to promote students to the next class. At the end of Class VIII students take the J.S.C examination. At the end of Class X, students take the first high stake test known as the Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C) examination. This test and its result are very important as they have a great impact on students' subsequent education and career prospects. Those who pass successfully are eligible to be admitted into a college to study at the higher secondary level. After studying for a further two years students take the Higher Secondary School Certificate (H.S.C) examination.

### **A chronological review of the past S.S.C examination papers**

Because of the role the examination plays in creating a de facto curriculum, it is useful to examine recent shifts in examination contents.

Before the introduction of the communicative syllabus in 1998 at the secondary level for Class IX and X, the national prescribed textbook was based on selected literary passages of prose and poetry. Students also used guidebooks and notebooks for grammar, essays, letter writing and translation. There were two papers for English at the S.S.C examination. In the first paper students had to answer questions based on the prose and poetry from the textbook, and questions related to grammar, translation from Bangla to English and letter and application writing. In the second paper students were required to answer questions related to reading comprehension, grammar, translation from English to Bangla and composition writing. One of the main drawbacks of this approach, that was severely criticised, was that students only learned English grammar that was not helpful to the use of English in everyday situations. The government took a range of initiatives to address this problem and these are discussed in the next chapter.

Since the introduction of the communicative language syllabus and textbook in 1998 (Farooqui, 2010) there have been incongruities in the setting of the examination paper for English. These have included changes in the distribution of marks from year to year, irregular inclusion of grammar questions.

Jasim Uddin, a teacher educator I interviewed, stated that re- introduction of grammar in the S.S.C examination would take us back into the old education system. He argued, "This is against the principle of communicative language teaching. If we have to assess students' grammatical knowledge so explicitly then why have we made changes from grammar translation method to CLT?"

However the most significant changes are made in the English first paper question. Since the introduction of communicative syllabus and revised examination, there was a passage from the textbook *English for Today*. In 2016 S.S.C examination for the first time there was no reading passage from the *English for Today* textbooks. There were two reading passages in the examination which followed various types of comprehensive questions to check students reading ability, but both were unseen.

Regarding choosing the reading passage from outside the textbook Mahfuz Ahmed, a teacher trainer who teaches in one of the government teacher training colleges and also has experience of conducting training for the secondary school English teachers, explained:

We are supposed to assess students' reading capability. If we give a reading passage from the textbook which they have read before then we are not judging students' reading capability.

In this regard he cited examples of various English test all over the world like IELTS, TOEFL where students never expect a reading passage that they have studied earlier.

Another participant, Abul Monsur, a secondary English teacher of a government girls high school and one of the head examiners of S.S.C examination for English, explained that the new examination encourages students to read, along with the textbook *English for Today*, various kinds of English texts, such as newspapers, magazines and other simple English books. He added that in the examination the reading passage would be very much similar to the text from the book *English for Today* and suggested that students should read



various topics related to our history, tradition, culture, daily science, computers and our liberation war.

The National Curriculum 2012 for English stated that for the reading part “Test items must be developed by question setters.... Text or test items should not be taken directly from textbooks” (National Curriculum, 2012, p. 69). So gradually there is a sign that the questions for the S.S.C examination are developing following the curriculum guidelines.

However, a teacher trainer in this regard explained that the concept at the beginning of the introduction of the CLT was that there will be one comprehensive composition from the *English for Today* textbooks and then students would have to answer various questions based on that. Then there will be another comprehensive composition which students have not seen before and that composition would be followed by the same patterns of question that students answer in case of the seen composition. This would give opportunity to evaluate students about they have learned from the text *English for Today* and what they have learned about how to apply the communicative patterns in similar situations.

### **Teachers’ stories of practice**

While examination driven teaching and learning predominates, my interviews and observations recorded a number of teacher led initiatives aimed at teaching to the fuller expectations of the curriculum.

#### ***Shopan***

One such initiative has been to create an English environment. Shopan, an experienced English teacher, has a belief that when students are in an environment where everyone speaks English or at least tries to speak English with other students everyone will become more confident in speaking English. In his routine there is a time slot called *speaking hour*, a half an hour break when students remain inside the boundary of the school, have some light snacks or drinks if they like and every student in the whole school speaks English or at least tries to. Some of them are struggling to make sentences, but they are trying. It is not a structured discussion or conversation and no teacher is guiding or helping or correcting the students. They just talk to each other or in a group. They

have been given a topic of the day from the year planner. The great advantage that Shopan highlights about *speaking time* is that it helps student to overcome shyness and inertia and it creates a belief, strength and confidence among students that they can speak in English.

He emphasised the importance of creating inclusion of speaking and listening tests in the S.S.C and H.S.C examinations, in order to motivate students to practice speaking.

However, he believed there was scope to teach students to be fluent in spoken English at the same time as preparing them for the existing examination. He pointed out, for example, those students' reading skills would develop, if they would learn a wider vocabulary. He stated:

At least forty marks in the examination are based on two reading passages. So my first priority is to teach students the prescribed NCTB text, develop their reading skills and teach vocabularies from those texts. I strongly encourage my students to read various kinds of English texts. In my school there is a library where there are various kinds of English book. I have donated my personal collections of many books. To encourage my students to use the library when I get a chance I go to the library and study there with others. In my class I introduce a system that I called *passwords*. Students need these words when they come in the class. They are actually some new words from the textbooks and students have a diary each where they have to write these words. I explain the meaning and usage of the words in class and they know that there will be some class test and marks will be added in their school final grade. So they learn those words with utmost importance. It works. And since I have introduced it I find it helps students to learn new vocabulary.

Shopan showed me how his strategy was compatible with the new curriculum. In the curriculum document there is a provision of school based assessment especially for listening and speaking. The aim is that students' language progress is evaluated by the teacher and twenty percent of marks will be added from the continuous assessment throughout the year by the relevant teacher in the year end final examination.

He continued:

Students need to write dialogues in the examination. Various types of model dialogues are available in different guidebooks, like a dialogue between a student and a teacher, a doctor and a patient, two friends, a shop keeper and a customer. Students generally memorise those. I actually ask students to role play in the class and during *speaking hour*. Sometimes I ask them to write sentences that they have heard from others.

Students have to write compositions in the examination. There is a general tendency among students to memorise selected compositions from the guidebooks. Shopan acknowledged that it is not entirely possible to eliminate this tendency, especially since it is easy to predict the topics of various composition that students need to write in the examination and if students write from memorisation it is easy and quick. It does not require any thinking. Therefore he does not discourage his students from memorising but he encourages them to add some new sentences, substitute sentences, and alter words of the compositions that they learn from different books, so that their writing skills will develop.

While Shopan teaches writing composition he highlights various grammatical terms and the transformation of the sentences. When students read or write a composition he asks them to change some sentences into different forms, such as changing some simple sentences into complex or compound ones. The great benefit of this, as he explained, is that students are learning some new sentences and slowly they are building their writing skills and developing their grammatical knowledge at the same time.

### ***Emdad***

Emdad, a rural secondary English teacher, described his efforts to make his classes interesting and effective in the following way:

I try to relate my teaching and examination preparation with real life. I emphasise the examination and expect that my students will get good grades. Otherwise all my efforts will be valueless. But at the same time I try not to make my class a boring place where students will sit and listen to my lectures as passive learners.

For example, when I teach them the present continuous tense, I go near the open window at the class. I ask them if the window is open or closed. Then I start

closing the window and at that time I ask them: “What am I doing now?” Some of the students reply: “You are closing the window”. I repeat with them “Yes I am closing the window.” Then I come to the definition and some more examples of present continuous tense and I try to explain when we use this. If time permits I do some more practice from the book.

Similarly to teach adjectives in class, I ask my students to suppose I am a police officer. “You have lost something,” I say. “Now you want to report it to the police. Think how you are going to report this so that the police officer can find it. You can give as much detail as you can, for example what it looks like, what is the shape, colour, and so on.” I ask students to work as a group. Then I ask them to describe the lost object in their group. I invite someone from the group to come and report the lost object.

Similarly I might ask them to think of the good qualities and characteristics that they like in a best friend. I also ask them to think about the qualities that they don’t like. After all these activities I come to the definition and uses of adjectives. I give them some more examples and types of adjectives and some exercises from the book. Then I give homework to my students to write an essay on *Your favourite personality*. The reason I give it as homework is because it is one of the very common topics that come in various national examinations. Students can also find it in guidebooks. Students memorise but I just want to make sure that even if they memorise they still will be able to write few sentences of their own.

As I listened to Emdad’s account of his work, I thought back to my own experiences and those of my former school friends. One particular friend described how he used to memorise for the examination. Sometimes he memorised an essay, or a letter understanding the meaning of the English text, and sometimes he memorised without understanding the meaning. He recalled that when he memorised something without understanding and forgot some of the words in the examination then he messed up the rest of the text as well. But if he memorised knowing the meaning, if he forgot something he could still manage to find some alternative words to make sense. He confessed it is a difficult task to go to the examination hall without the memorising.

## **Saiful**

Even though there is no speaking or listening test for English at any of the national examinations at the secondary level in Bangladesh, there is a strong guideline to implement speaking and listening test at the school level. For the junior section it is recommended to allocate 10 marks for speaking and 10 marks for listening skills which will weigh in the student's year end final examination. Saiful Islam, a secondary English teacher of a government girls high school in a small town, gave an account of his endeavour to arrange speaking and listening test for his students.

It is difficult to implement that kind of test, especially for those who are going to sit at the J.S.C and S.S.C examination, but I try to do it for other classes. I think it is essential for all the classes. For the junior section I encourage students to speak in English in the class and at the beginning of the year I tell them that I will set a speaking and listening test which will be weighted in the final examination. There is no guideline provided to us about how to set the speaking and listening test. I am personally familiar with various types of speaking tests and the one I prefer is like the IELTS speaking test. But I take in a very simple way and I use pictures in the test. I ask students some simple questions, in fact very straight forward questions like *what is your name, please tell me something about your family, tell me something about your village, school, etc.* Then I give them one or two pictures and ask them to describe what they can see. With some students I sometimes extend the discussion, like I ask them to compare two pictures and maybe some abstract questions. I usually use pictures from the relevant class textbook but sometimes I collected pictures from the internet as well. In the NCTB website there are listening materials, and I have downloaded all in my computer. I have made a CD to use in the class. In the training I came to know that a speaking and listening test will be included soon at the S.S.C and H.S.C examinations, so whatever I can I try to make my students familiar with those. If there is some practice then once it is introduced it will not be totally new to my students. I think it is very essential to include speaking and listening in the S.S.C and H.S.C examinations.

## **Alignment with relevant research literature**

The relationship between examinations and the development of de facto curriculum is widely discussed in international research literature. Here I highlight some of the key relevant writings, focussing first on the concept of washback and then on other impacts of tests on learning and teaching.

### ***Washback***

The impact of testing on teaching and learning is generally referred to as washback (Alderson & Wall, 1993, Bailey, 1996) or backwash (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Biggs 1995). Some researchers (Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Cheng, 1997) define the term ‘washback’ as the impact of testing on teaching and learning, while others (Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Eckstein & Noah, 1993) emphasise its impact on education more generally, including curriculum, teaching materials, publication, students’ feelings and attitudes, and teaching methods.

Washback is usually defined as the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng & Curtis, 2004). Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt and Ferman (1996) referred to it as the connection between testing and learning (p. 298). Messick (1996) stated that “washback, a concept prominent in applied linguistics, refers to the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning” (p. 241). Buck (1988) observed the effects of Japanese university entrance examination on the teachers and learners and stated that both students and teachers shape their classroom activity according to the demand of the test, as this test has a great impact on students’ future life.

Moreover, some researchers have argued that tests can have an impact not only on the teaching and the learning but other areas as well. Pierce (1992) noted that “the washback effect, sometimes referred to as the systemic validity of a test, refers to the impact of a test on classroom pedagogy, curriculum development, and educational policy” (p. 687). Bachman and Palmer (1996) viewed washback as the impact of a test on society, educational systems and individuals. They stated that this impact operates on two levels: at the micro level (the effect of testing on students and teachers) and at the macro level (the impact on society and educational system). McNamara (2000) agreed that tests not

only have an impact on teaching and learning but other areas as well. “Tests can also have effects beyond the classroom. The wider effect of tests on the community as a whole, including the school, is referred to as test impact” (p. 74).

Rea-Dickins (1997) attempted a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders in language testing, including:

Language testers, teachers, parents, administrators, teacher educators, sponsors and funding bodies, government bodies, the public, various national and international examination authorities, members of working parties and curriculum committees, test takers (and the larger group of learners of whom they form part) ... and to this list we should add test administrators as well as test users, for example university admission officers who need to interpret test that are conducted by government or by various authority plays a vital role to direct teaching and learning (p. 305).

Andrews (2004) also identified different areas: “The effects of tests on teaching and learning, the educational system, and the various stakeholders in the education process” (p. 37). Spratt (2005) summarized previous researches done in this field and identified a range of areas that can be affected by washback. She concluded from the previous researchers that the areas affected by washback are curriculum, materials, teaching methods, feeling and attitudes, learning.

However, the above discussion shows that the term *washback* has been interpreted from multiple perspectives. Therefore, in this study, while the impact of washback on classroom teaching and learning is highlighted, it is also useful to be aware that parents and community come to value examination directed teaching and that they may well be resistant to changes that could impact on existing success rates of their children.

### ***Negative washback***

Some researchers highlight the negative impact of tests on the teaching and the learning. Booth (2012) while studying the impact of the TOEIC examination at a South Korean university's context found that students put emphasis on what is important for the examination rather than mastering the language. Booth further stated that students focus

more on reading and writing, and particularly on grammar and vocabulary than mastering language necessary for everyday use.

Smith (1991) also found that some teachers excluded topics that were not included in the public examination because they only focused on improving students' tests score.

Wall and Alderson (1996) presented a similar view in their Sri Lankan impact study:

A number of teachers, however, consistently skip over the listening lesson in their textbooks, because they know that listening will not be tested in the examination. Other teachers may 'do listening' but in a way that does not resemble the textbook designers' intentions. One teacher, for example, admitted that he only covers the listening lessons if the type of questions that students have to answer resembles an item type that might appear in the examination for reading. (pp. 216- 217).

Qi (2005) claimed that classroom activities, which aimed at preparing students to pass the examination, were not good for language development because students were practising test-taking skills rather than language learning. Yang (1980) identified three drawbacks of the entrance examination in Taiwan. First, the entrance examination prevents flexibility that is needed to acknowledge individual differences. Second, as it is a competitive examination, it encourages students to be selfish rather than cooperative. Third, as communicative skills are not tested in the examination, schools overlook these skills, and put emphasis on what will be tested in the exam. Yang concluded in his study that the entrance examination is a major barrier to promote English language learning in Taiwan (Yang cited in Chen, 2002).

As the results of the survey and the stories reported above show, there are similar problems from washback in the Bangladesh context.

### ***Impact of tests on teaching***

Many studies have been carried out to investigate the impact of tests on the teachers. In American context, Spann and Kaufman (2015) stated that teachers teach the test-taking skills and emphasise the subjects that are tested in the high-stake test and neglect the non-tested subject.



They concluded that the impact of tests depends on their importance. Shohamy (2014) examined the influence and power of test and concluded from her three language test studies that teaching methods become *test like*. Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt and Ferman (1996) found that the low-stakes Arabic examination does not make any changes in the teaching method, whereas the high stakes EFL examination influences teachers to teach the way that helps students in their examination preparation and it aims at developing students' test-taking strategies. Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) found influences of tests on how teachers teach but they noted that it varied from teacher to teacher. Similarly, Watanabe (1996) drew a similar conclusion in his study regarding the Japanese University entrance examination. He concluded that it is not easy to say that the examination influences all teachers in the same way. It depends on various factors such as educational background, teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards exams.

Alderson and Wall (1993) in their study of the introduction of the new school-leaving examination in Sri Lanka found no changes in teaching methodology before and after the introduction of the new English Examination, although teachers claimed that they changed their teaching methodology after its introduction. However, they did find evidence that teachers changed the content of their teaching. Cheng (1997; 1999; 2005) found that teachers changed the content of their lessons as a result of changes in the examination, but not their teaching methods. Similarly, in Cheng's study there were no changes in the amount of teacher's talk, despite the changes in the examination. Qi (2004; 2005) came to similar conclusion when she examined the NMET test in China. She concluded that the new test had a considerable impact on teaching materials but did not bring about any changes in the teaching methodology. Chapman and Snyder (2000) concluded that teachers did not change their teaching methodology, despite the changes in the examination. They linked this finding to the lack of understanding regarding the changes in the format and the contents of the test. They identified teachers' lack of understanding regarding how the changes were needed to improve students' performance.

However, Saif (2006) found a clearer connection between the examination and the way teachers teach. His study, a multiphase empirical study, was conducted in a university context in Canada where international teaching assistants were trained and a spoken

language proficiency test was administered. Data were gathered before, during and after the training through interviews with various stakeholders and class observations. The writer concluded that teachers' teaching methodology and class activity are mostly directed by the contents and goals of the test. Similar trends are visible in the Bangladesh context. When there is any change in the examination, changes occur in examination related textbooks, guidebooks and other publications. Teachers in schools and in coaching centres also adjust the content of their teaching to match with examinations. From the published literature (Khan, 2010; Maniruzzaman & Haque 2010) and from my study it is evident that teaching in Bangladesh to a great extent focus on preparing students for the examination.

### ***Impact of tests on learning***

Researchers also examined how tests influence students. Andrews, Fullilove and Wong (2002) while examining the impact of changes in the Hong Kong Advanced Supplementary (AS) test found that inclusion of the oral component in the university admission test resulted in improvement in students' oral performance. Nevertheless, they noticed that in some cases students prepare themselves only to cope with the examination format and they found that in some cases students memorised phrases to cope with the examination format. Similarly Ferman (2004) found a strong washback effect of the Oral Matriculation test on teachers and students in Israel. Ferman concluded that because of the test students and teachers paid more attention to oral language skills. This test resulted in increased time allotment for practising oral skills. Saif (2006) suggested that testing had a positive impact on learning outcomes. Huges (1988), investigating the introduction of the new English examination at a Turkish university, found a similar positive relationship between the introduction of the new examination and students' learning.

However, Cheng's (1998) study concluded that the new examination did not bring any changes in students' learning. The washback effect of this examination seemed to be limited in the sense that it did not appear to have a fundamental impact on students' learning. For example, she stated, "Students' perceptions of their motivation to learn English and their learning strategies remain largely unchanged" (Cheng, 1998: 297).

### ***Impact of high-stakes or public examination***

Madaus (1988 ) defined high-stakes tests as those tests “whose results are seen – rightly or wrongly - by students, teachers, administrators, parents or the general public, as being used to make important decisions that immediately and directly affect them” (p. 87). Loschert (2000) described high-stakes tests as assessments in which “students, teachers, administrators, and the entire school systems must account for student performance” (p. 1). Shohamy (1993) described the impact of public tests as “most powerful devices, capable of changing and prescribing the behaviour of those who are affected by their results- that is administrators, teachers, students” (p. 186). Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt and Ferman (1996) emphasised the power of the public test and argued that test results have a great effect on learners as well as programmes, since many important decisions are made based on the test results. Wall and Alderson (1996) stated that “the examination has had a demonstrable effect on the content of language lessons” (pp. 126-127). This effect was that of the narrowing of the curriculum to those areas most likely to be tested. Buck (1988) described the importance of university entrance examination in Japan as follows:

Japan is a country in which the entrance examination reigns supreme. It is almost impossible to overstate the influence of these examinations on both the educational system as a whole, and the day-to-day content of classroom teaching. Their importance in the lives of young people is such that almost all future social and economic advancement is dependent on the results of these entrance examinations (p. 16).

Ingulsrud (1994) commented on the financial impact on students and their families in discussing Japanese university entrance examinations:

For students who are serious about entering a highly ranked university, a considerable amount of coaching is normal in preparing for the entrance examination. High-school students spend evenings, weekends, and even vacations

preparing for the test at the various juku [exam preparation schools] that provide a range of coaching services. Supplemental education of this kind costs a good deal of money, and yet students and their families are willing to make such sacrifices. If they do well, they are assured of a place in a prestigious university, which, in turn, leads to a successful career in business or government. (pp. 79-80)

Similar trends are visible in Bangladesh where the results of the S.S.C and H.S.C examinations are very crucial for a student. One of the most important factors is that the result of both of the examinations is a big factor for the students' subsequent higher studies and career opportunities. In public university admission, along with an admission test students' S.S.C and H.S.C results are considered. After finishing the H.S.C examination a large number of students who are aiming to compete for the various public university admission tests enrol themselves in various means of university admission coaching.

Because the examination result is a big factor in terms of social prestige, and because parents whose children are successful in the examination feel proud, and are considered to be successful within their community, parental attitudes are impacted by the format of examinations. It might be speculated that those parents whose children are currently successful will not appreciate any change in the format of the examination or any changes in teaching content on the part of schools since these might jeopardise not only their children's success but also their own social standing. In this way not only has the examination format impacted on societal expectations but these societal expectations make it difficult to change the examination format.

### **The role of examination in the English language learning landscape**

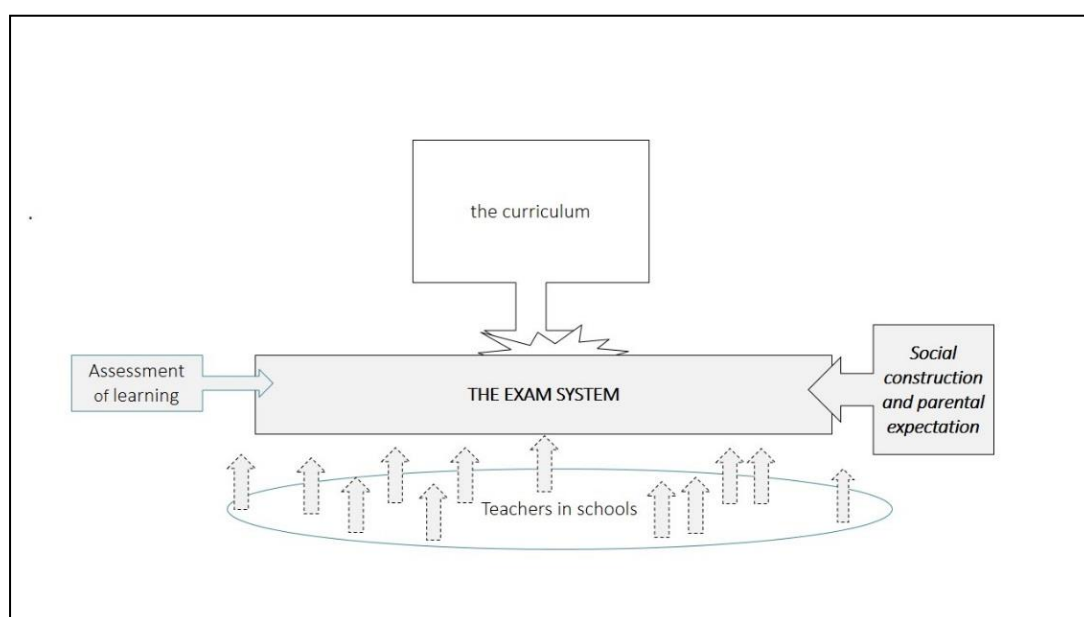
Because of test driven teaching, the speaking and listening components of learning English are not considered very significant as they are not tested in the final examinations, despite the curriculum's clear goals and its statement that students will acquire all four skills of language. In most cases teachers are concerned only with reading and writing and to complete the syllabus necessary for the terminal examination.

Podder (2011) highlighted the mismatch between the introduction of a communicative based curriculum that focuses on all four skills and the assessment that assesses only

reading and writing skills. Thus students do not practice speaking and listening as there are no apparent benefits. Shohrab Hossain, a secondary English teacher, emphasised the need to revise the examination:

Our whole examination system needs to change. It should develop like the IELTS examination system where students are required to prove their language skills. There must be a speaking and listening test in our examination systems. Then students will be motivated to learn speaking and listening. There are many students every year who take preparation for the IELTS examination in Bangladesh and you can see they do not try to memorise any composition. They have this belief that the essay topics will not be common or it is not possible to answer by memorising. So they develop their language skills. Similarly, if we can develop our examination system like this, then students will be interested to develop their language skills.

A good number of teachers, teacher educators, and other stakeholders I interviewed considered the introduction of speaking and listening test in the S.S.C and H.S.C as a prerequisite for motivating students and teachers to develop speaking and listening skills. On the other hand, a change of this order may require more than a governmental initiative; societal expectations are involved, as the following figure indicates:



#### **Figure 4.2: The role of the examination system**

The examination is a significant component of education in Bangladesh. It has the power to disrupt, and even block, government initiatives in curriculum change. In the two chapters that follow I will examine the shift in mandated curriculum towards communicative skills and the processes of pre-service and in-service training of English teachers. This chapter has focused on the instrumentality of the examination system in inhibiting content and pedagogical change. The power of the examination system exists because it is not only a formal means of assessing learning, but because it serves as a process of social construction and so is upheld by parental expectations. As an instrument of assessment it could perhaps be relatively easy to change. However, it is upheld by the conscious and unconscious patterns of parental expectation. Those who have the money to send their children to highly reputed schools and to pay for private tuition currently have a reasonable expectation that their children can gain the so called Golden GPA, the solid A+ grade in the national examinations. Their expectations, shaped by current situation, give political strength to the current system.

My discussions with other stakeholders also revealed the following issues. One of the challenges is to create awareness among teachers, parents, teacher trainers, in fact every stakeholder related to the secondary education in Bangladesh. A critical look reveals that in Bangladesh secondary school context whenever a change is introduced, it receives a huge amount of criticism, then it is changed again after a certain period. Adding something to the curriculum or changing an existing curriculum is sometimes done without any significant piloting or research. A secondary English teacher, Jitendranath Roy, in this regard stated:

We only come to know about any changes in the curriculum and examination when the examination comes closer. Because of that students remain anxious about the examination and we cannot give them proper guidelines. We are teaching in the field so before introducing anything our opinion should be valued. I am an examiner of English for the S.S.C examination and I have never seen that I have been informed any changes from any government sources before it actually takes place.

Perhaps making teachers, students and others aware of the changes in advance would reduce the anxiety among teachers.

### **Possible directions for change**

Despite the power of the current examination and the difficulties of creating change, many teachers and teacher educators are actively advocating for change, particularly for the introduction of speaking and listening test in the high-stakes examinations. They acknowledge the challenge of finding a suitable model for testing speaking and listening in ways that are compatible with the curriculum directions.

As my interviews indicated, some teachers do practice speaking with students in the English class. They complained that they have no systematic directions for how they should evaluate students' performance or for what they should really emphasise in communication. Abdur Rahim, a secondary English teacher commented:

At the moment there is no rubric for marking students' writing. Teachers award marks according their own criteria. It is sometimes the case that in one essay a teacher gives 8 of 10, the same essay when another teacher may give 6 out of 10. If a student writes from his own there may be some mistakes like errors in sentence structure, grammatical mistakes or spelling mistakes, on the other hand if a student writes from memorisation often these kinds of mistakes are not visible so he or she, even writing from the memorisation, is getting better marks than the first one. Developing a rubric and making it available to teachers and rewarding students' own writing more than memorisation should be encouraged. Rubrics need to be developed for assessing speaking before introducing a speaking test nationwide.

Thus there is need for research, and piloting, to determine a suitable model for a speaking test. The teachers and teacher educators I interviewed discussed possible approaches to oral testing. A possibility, some suggested, might be a three part speaking test similar to the IELTS speaking test where in the first part the examiner asks the test taker some general questions related to everyday life for about three to four minutes. The second part could involve speaking on a given topic. The candidate could be provided with a cue

card with some guided questions, be allowed to take notes for a moment and then be required to speak for one to two minutes. In the third part of the test the examiner could ask the candidate more questions related to the second part. The questions in this part could be more critical and conceptual and could generally require better language and analytical skills to answer. Among other types of tests that are prevalent in the world are those that use a picture and ask candidates to describe what they can see in the picture. In the higher level the candidate is sometimes required to compare and contrast two pictures. There are other types of tests that ask students to role play certain situations and sometimes students are required to ask the examiner questions.

So what would be a suitable model for the Bangladesh secondary school context? Can we adapt one of these, or do we need a completely different one? Would it be better if there were specific, written questions for the teacher to ask in the oral English test or it would be better to evolve a natural conversation? Do we have enough qualified and experienced teachers who would be able to hold a natural conversation according to the students' ability level?

The mechanics of the test also need to be explored. Would there be one examiner and one candidate at a time, or can one examiner test two students at a time? If an examiner tests two students, could questions be asked that would prompt students to hold a conversation together? Would it be better if an examiner tests several students at a time?

Another issue that was raised in interviews with teachers related to teacher autonomy and the possible misuse of the power. Concern was expressed that if teachers have the authority to award marks towards students' final grades, they might use it as weapon for exploiting students for private tuition.

A rural secondary English teacher, Nurul Amin, articulated fears about possible abuse:

If speaking and listening tests are included in the S.S.C examination and teachers are given power to award marks, then in most cases teachers will abuse it. Look at the practical examinations for various science subjects. Twenty five marks are internally assessed for each subject and almost everyone gets full marks without any examination. In most of the village schools there are not enough science materials and tools to conduct practical classes. So throughout the year there are



almost no practical classes held. In the examination they do not have necessary and sufficient materials for the practical science examination. But every student gets almost full marks in the examination. Sometimes if a teacher is unhappy with any students then he gets very poor marks which affect his examination grade for his whole life. Similarly, if speaking and listening tests were included in the final examination, then teachers will abuse it. They will use it a weapon to abuse students. If they have any personal clash with any student then they will give very poor marks. There may be some benefits of adding speaking and listening test, but it will create more problems and corruption than the benefit it will bring.

There is already a concern that certain teachers compel students to come to their home for private tuition and those who do not come will not get good marks in the examination. Recognising the negative impact of such practice the government has already circulated a notice that teachers cannot teach their own school's students at home. It is not always obeyed. So, as there is already evidence of abuses, there is a legitimate fear that such abuse could increase if the class teacher could allocate the marks for a speaking test which would be included in the student's final grade. There is need for planning to reduce such abuses as well as planning the introduction of changes.

There are initiatives to bring changes from different stakeholders in Bangladesh. In the next chapter I will present the issue of the role of English as a means communication for Bangladeshi learners, the importance of communication in the present English curriculum and different stakeholders' responses to the communicative approach to English teaching in Bangladesh.

## **Chapter Five: Communicative English in Bangladesh**

The previous chapter examined the importance of the examination system in creating a de facto, and diminished English language curriculum. This chapter examines the tension between a demand for communicative English language skills in both employment and education and lack of effective resources to develop communicative language skills.

It begins with a teacher's account of his practice, illustrated by a montage of photos. His practice is perhaps in accord with the practices reported by respondents to the survey discussed in Chapter Three. However his practice, although not unique, is not typical of what I observed in my study and what has been reported in other research findings. The chapter then reports government initiatives to develop communicative approaches to English teaching, including the introduction of CLT and its associated textbooks. The chapter then examines the place of English in business, migration, and professional life in Bangladesh illustrating the overview with several individual narratives. It next considers the gap that still exists between the government's policy to improve people's communicative skills in English and its implementation in schools. It concludes with discussion of emergent themes.

### ***Emdad's story***

Emdad, a secondary English teacher, talked about the initiatives he takes to make his class a fun place to learn while emphasising the development of students' language skills. He described his practice:

I try to make my class a happy environment where students study with lots of joy and happiness. Sometimes my students say: "We don't want to study today." I have such a good relationship with my students that they aren't afraid of saying something. I say "Okay then let's go out and play!" I play some language game with them in the school field, related to vocabulary.

I use different kinds of activities in my teaching. Though I teach English I discuss other subjects in my class as well. I keep some time at the end of the every class where students are required to speak in English. They enjoy it.

Apart from that I run a language club where sometimes we arrange games, sometimes short speeches, role plays, and sometimes we watch English movies. I have the intention to arrange activities that are fun and that help students to develop their English skills. There are some nice English books available in the club and I allow students to take them home if they want to read them.

Many teachers encourage our students to write following a guidebook or a model passage. I always tell my students to write from their own ideas not from memorising. I tell them that if you can convince me that it is your writing I will give you more marks even if there are mistakes and the work is shorter in length than those who write from memorisation. I am hopeful that there will be change in the tradition of memorising, though it will take some time. The images below illustrate some of the activities Emdad takes with his class.



**Figure 5. 1: Some of Emdad's activities with his students**

In the first image Emdad has asked his students to make paper planes and then to throw them in the class. Using those enjoyable activities he taught them how to describe what they have made, including the use of prepositions to describe different directions. In the second picture Emdad has taken the students outside to play language games. The third shows group work in the classroom. In the fourth the students are speaking English as they do their weekly clean up.

### **Other teachers' initiatives practices to develop students' language skills**

Other teachers in my study also reported ways that they sought to create opportunities for communicative language in their classes.

As reported in Chapter Four, Shopan, a secondary English teacher, has created an environment called *speaking hour* where he has given his students opportunities to talk to each other in English outside their classroom while having light snacks. He has created space in his class routine to accommodate this practice and he also provides support and guidance.

Hasan, a rural school English teacher, also described speaking activities he arranged in the class:

In my class I have seen that students are very interested in speaking. It's a village school and not many meritorious students come to study here. Students are from average to poor family backgrounds. At least once in a week I arrange speaking activities with my students. I give a topic to the class and ask them to speak in English. The students then take some preparation and speak. I also arrange something like a debate in the class.

But continuing these practices becomes difficult when the examination is approaching. Nearer to that time students only like to study what will be important for the examination.

Abdur Rahim, a girls' secondary school teacher, explained how he attempts to provide students with opportunities for practising English:

Only practising English in the English class is not enough. Students need to use English outside class as well. When someone is learning English in an English environment they have the opportunities to use English in different places. We need to think how we can provide a better environment for our students. One of my initiatives is to arrange an English debate. I divide students in the class and then help them to arrange an English debate in class. Then I arrange debates among different classes and I also contact other English teachers in the district and arrange an inter-school debate competition. However, there are numerous barriers, including to managing time as I need to aware that I am preparing my students for the examination as well.

Imran, who teaches in a city school, reported how his students love the language lab:

We have a multimedia classroom and a sound system in most of the classes in our school. We have a technological expert who comes whenever we need. When I take the students to the language lab they think that now they are in the ocean. There is no pressure to learn; they themselves just love to learn. They love to practice speaking in English, and really enjoy it when they watch movies and other programmes in English. When they come back into class again they have a feeling that they come back into a cage.

The facilities Imran can offer his students are by no means common as he teaches in one of the very modern and prestigious schools in the capital. The facilities that this school offers would be inconceivable in most village schools.



The images below capture some the activities discussed above.



**Figure 5. 2: Initiatives by various teachers**

In this montage the first picture shows a teacher supervising an English speaking session outside the classroom. The second shows an English debate competition between two schools in a small town. The third picture shows students in a very remote rural school working in a group in their English class. The fourth shows a collection of books in a library which is a personal initiative of an English teacher who is also the head teacher of the school. Students are allowed to read in the library and they are also allowed to take books home.

## **Initiatives to develop communicative competency in English**

Many steps have been taken by the Bangladesh government to develop students' communicative ability so that they can use English in their everyday life. A curriculum based on a communicative approach has replaced the grammar translation approach. Textbooks from primary to higher secondary level have been written following the principles of communicative language teaching. These books are designed to:

Emphasise learning English as an international language for communicating locally and globally. The *English for Today* textbooks have been developed to help students attain competency in all four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. (NCTB, 2012)

The new textbooks, *English for Today*, have been written to provide opportunities to practice language in context. They aim to provide contexts and resources for teachers and students to practice various language skills at the same time as taking preparation for the examination.

Shafiq, a secondary school English teacher, described how he used textbooks:

In almost every unit there are relevant pictures, sample questions to ask for arousing interest and different communicative classroom activities are suggested. Skilful use of these textbooks, encouraging students to work on improving their language skills and setting homework and class activities where students are required to practice what they learned in class, can ensure both good results and improving students' language skills. There are also plenty of teaching materials available from the board of secondary and higher secondary website. Some of the teaching materials, such as materials from BBC Janala, also have been provided to me while I was in training.

Parvez, a secondary English teacher, expressed a similar view:

These textbooks are really good. They are systematic and the most important feature, to me, is that these books have all necessary instruction written. Even new teachers can teach using these books in a communicative way if they follow the suggested steps in the books.

There are pictures to use, different kinds of activities to do with the students and there are also options for practising all four skills in every lesson.

However, Monsur Ahmed, a government secondary English teacher, described his experience differently:

Up to class VIII usually there is a seen passage in the examination, a text taken from *English for Today*, and based on that text students are asked to answer different comprehensive questions. So as a teacher I don't have any problem to teach the *English for Today* textbooks up to Class VIII. The problem starts when I go to teach the English textbooks in the Class IX and X. When no passage is taken from the textbooks for the examination, students become demoralised to study the prescribed textbooks. They are not eager to learn anything from the textbook. They ask: "Sir why should we study this book when nothing comes in the examination from this book?" I can explain many things about the book and use it to teach in the class but the ultimate result is they know that whatever I am teaching from this book is not important and will not be in the examination. The end result is that teaching using this book is not so effective in Class IX and X as it would be if some of the questions from this book were in the final examination.

To some teachers, use of these prescribed textbooks, far from encouraging communicative language simply means reading from the book and explaining the text. In one of my observations Nijam Uddin started his class using the *English for Today* textbook.

He said to his class: "Look at the picture. What are the people doing here? When do people do these kinds of work?"

All the students read from the book after him: "Look at the picture. What are the people doing here? When do people do these kinds of work?"

He asked students if anyone could give the Bangla meaning of these sentences. He then told them the Bangla meaning.

There are some pictures in the book after that introduction but he did not spend any time on the pictures but moved to the next section. Then he continued reading and translating:



“Listen to the dialogue and answer the questions.” He read a dialogue and translated it into Bangla. Sometimes he asked students to give the equivalent Bangla translation.

He then asked a student to read from the next section. The student started reading from the text although he needed help from the teacher to pronounce some words. When he would stop the teacher would tell him the word, and in this way the lesson continued. The teacher stopped the student after every sentence to ask other students for the Bangla meaning, and in most cases the teacher translated.

The bell rang while the reading and translating continued, signalling class time was over.

Saiful, however, emphasised the use of English all the time in English classes.

The medium of instruction in the English class must be English. If we teach in Bangla in the English class how will students learn English? In my class most of the time I try to speak in English and encourage students to speak in English. It is difficult to do always as some students can not follow the instructions or know how to respond. Sometimes I need to explain in Bangla but there is a positive change I can see. Students are becoming interested in English, they try to speak in English and their fear of speaking in English is also minimising.

The English curriculum for secondary and higher secondary levels is designed to address the need for communicative skills. In the next section I will discuss the communicative language teaching approach and the present English curriculum at the secondary level.

### **CLT and the English curriculum at the secondary level in Bangladesh**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as Richards and Rodgers (2014) suggested, started with the theory of communication. Littlewood (2010) further stated:

One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view (p.1).

The aim in CLT is to develop learners’ communicative competence. Communicative competence, Larsen-Freeman (2011) explained, involves knowing when and how to say what to whom. Savignon (1972) described communicative competence as:

The ability to function in a truly communicative setting that is in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic and paralinguistic competence must adapt itself to the total information input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors (p. 8).

Canale and Swaine (1980) provided what is regarded as the first comprehensive model of communicative competence which is further modified in Canale (1983). They identified four aspects of communicative competence. The first is the grammatical competence which refers to having knowledge of grammatical rules, vocabulary, sentence structure and pronunciation. The second competency is the sociolinguistic competence which refers to the knowledge of social norms, culture, politeness, and the situation where the language is used. The third is the discourse competence which is the ability to use language coherently in larger texts, composition, and speech. The fourth is the strategic competence which is the ability to use verbal and non-verbal language strategies to maintain communication, utilise turn taking and re-establish communication when it breaks down.

Characteristics of CLT, as Brandl (2008) summarised, include using various kinds of tasks to promote learning, encouraging learning by doing, providing rich input which is meaningful, comprehensive and elaborated, promoting cooperative and collaborative learning, focusing on form and meaning, providing feedback for error correction and recognising different affective factors of learning such as anxiety in language learning. In communicative language teaching the teacher works as a facilitator who creates opportunities for language learning. The teacher sometimes works as an advisor, answers students' queries, and monitors their learning. Students are actively involved in learning. They learn by doing and engaging in various communicative activities. As CLT is a student centred method, students need to take more responsibility for their own learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2011).

However, CLT does not advocate any prescribed method of teaching but encourages the adoption of an eclectic method. Thus it is the teacher's responsibility to choose necessary teaching and learning activities. So it largely depends on the teacher's ability to make the process successful. The success of a CLT approach also depends on the availability of the

quality teaching materials (Brandle, 2008). Medgays (1986) criticised CLT stating that CLT favours native teachers, as they have the natural ability to manipulate the language.

Since Independence in 1971, the grammar translation method (GTM) was the dominant method of teaching English at different levels in Bangladesh (Hasan, 2004). In GTM, as Richards and Rodgers (2014) noted, reading and writing were the main focus and hardly any emphasis was given on speaking and listening. Translation was paramount and students were expected to attain a high level of proficiency in translation. Grammar rules were taught first and then the rules were practised in translation. Teaching and learning were mainly teacher centred and students' native tongue was the medium of instruction in the class.

A necessity to reform English teaching in Bangladesh had been perceived for a long time and a task force was formed in 1976 with an aim to revise the English curriculum (Khan, 1999). Many large scale projects have been undertaken to improve the teaching of English. These projects are sometimes funded by the Bangladesh government and sometimes in partnership with the donor and aid agencies. Some of these projects focus exclusively on English teaching and learning (ELTIP, EIA) and in some that are more generalised of them a significant focus is given on English teaching and learning (TQI). Khan (1999) described how previous education committees emphasised the revision of the English language teaching curriculum. She reported how, under the project Orientation of Secondary School Teachers for Teaching English in Bangladesh (OSTTEB), a new English communicative language based syllabus was designed and planned to be implemented from class VI from 1996 onwards. The preface of that syllabus stated the prerequisites for successful implementation:

For successful implementation of this syllabus many new things will be required. Chief among these are suitable communicative language materials... Appropriate examinations that will test language skills, not the ability to memorise the contents of the textbook (Cited in Khan, 1999, p. 16).

In Bangladesh before the introduction of communicative language teaching, students were required to learn seemingly endless grammatical rules, and in the examination there were many isolated and unrelated grammar exercises. Students were also required to memorise answers for questions. The topics for composition, paragraph and other

writing tasks were fairly predictable. Grammar practices in isolation, translation from English to Bangla and vice versa, rote learning, use of students' native tongue as a medium of instruction in the class and memorisation were some of the features of the approach.

Hasan (2004) noted that in the English classroom the focus was mainly on grammar rules, and little attention was given to teaching students to use language in a given context. Students were not learning the use of language, rather they were learning the form and structure of the language.

The present curriculum for English at the secondary level was developed in 2012, following the Education Policy (2010). The Education Policy (2010) and the English Curriculum (2012) emphasised learning language for real life situations so that students could use the knowledge locally and globally. The education policy stated that learners should acquire skills to a high standard so that they could compete in the global context. The national curriculum for English emphasised the importance of learning English to communicate globally for various purposes, like business, employment, education, medical facilities and access to the wider world:

Being able to use the language for effective communication in real life situations locally and globally has become the prime purpose for learning English as a foreign language (National Curriculum for English, 2012).

The present curriculum (2012) for English was developed following the communicative approach to language teaching. It emphasises developing learners' skills in all four aspects of a language (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and expects that learners will be able to use language in real life situations. They should be able to communicate effectively in the local and global context. Student-centred teaching and learning is expected and teachers are encouraged to work as facilitators of learning. Teachers are encouraged to use various teaching aids, audio-video materials, multimedia, real life objects and modern technology in their teaching. The curriculum emphasises a positive attitude of teachers towards their students. It encourages group work and pair work and sitting arrangements that suit these activities. Teachers are encouraged to choose teaching methods that facilitate learning. In this curriculum rote learning is discouraged. Grammar is expected to be taught not in isolation but in appropriate contexts.

The curriculum acknowledges that teachers are at the centre of bringing changes to teaching and learning. For this teachers need to have good language skills as well as teaching skills. Thus initiatives are needed to train teachers to develop their language and pedagogical skills (National Curriculum, 2012). Training, pre- and in-service, of teachers is discussed in the next chapter.

### ***Reforming national examinations***

As discussed in the previous chapter, the current national examinations at the S.S.C and H.S.C level are a barrier to the promotion of communicative language teaching. However, attempts have been made to reform assessment. Changes have been made to the question patterns for the national examinations. Although students' reading and writing skills are still the only elements assessed, the question papers are designed to better align with the new curriculum. For example, students are asked to write dialogue, emails, formal and informal letters and compositions. Students' vocabulary knowledge is tested through different gap filling activities. Moreover, schools are encouraged to assess students' speaking and listening through school based assessment (SBA) (Rahman, 2015), and an SBA mark is to be added to students' end of year grade. However, there is no provision for assessing students' speaking and listening skills in the high stake examinations.

The examination system is often criticised for assessing students' memorisation skills rather than writing skills. The questions for the national examination are set centrally, but teachers are responsible to set questions for school examinations. Kabir, an English lecturer, shared his experience:

I think in the high stake test in Bangladesh, like S.S.C and H.S.C, topics for the writing should not be predictable. If a topic is easily predictable then students memorise for the examination and we are not judging the students' writing skills rather we are assessing students' memorisation skills. In that scenario students with better memorisation skills are getting good marks and students who try to write from their own writing skills find it difficult to get good marks.

When I set questions I try to set the questions in such a way that students are required to use their own writing skills. For example, in the completing story

section it is generally the case that the first few lines of a story are given in the question paper and then students are asked to write the rest. If a student memorises some common stories in most cases one of the stories will be in the examination. However, I set a scenario in few sentences in such a way that students can make different kinds of stories. I adopt the same kind of approach for the other writing tasks as well. I try to ensure that we are judging students' writing ability and not their memorisation skills.

Hasan, a secondary English teacher at a non-government high school, described his attempt in a similar way:

Now there is belief among students that they can answer from memorisation which is the big barrier to improve students' writings. I cannot change the pattern of the question paper but I try to make sure that students are learning to write paragraphs, stories, formal letters, e-mails and summarising a text on their own. When I set a question paper for a school examination, I try to design the question in such a way that students need to answer the questions using their own writing skills. I always discourage students to memorise.

### ***Introduction of an English version of the national curriculum***

The introduction of an English version of the national curriculum has been a further government initiative to address the growing demand for competence in English. Cadet colleges and some elite schools, mainly in the large cities, offer English medium study. Students study under the same national curriculum and attend the same national examinations but the medium of study and examination is English (except for Bangla). There are few such schools in relation to the huge number of secondary students in Bangladesh. Rahman (2015) reported that around 52 schools are offering an English version of the national curriculum.

Sumona, a college teacher, described why she wanted her son to study in the English version. She lived in a district town around 120 km from the capital city. Her husband also worked there. Their younger son, Nafiz a Class VII student, lived with his aunt in the capital and studied at a renowned school in the capital. She said:

We want our son to grow up with a strong foundation from the beginning. So we admitted him in the English version of his school. He studies under the same national curriculum. So he is growing up studying the same syllabus like other Bangladesh students study, but he will have better English skill than many other students. We have to pay extra tuition fees in the school and need to keep good house tutors for him for different subjects. I travel almost every week to the capital as there is no English version in any of the schools where I live. Still we are happy to do this for the good future of our child.

Now the medium of study is English in almost all the universities in Bangladesh, so he needs to have good grasp of English. May be he will have a chance to study abroad in the future.

### **Implementing classroom-based speaking and listening tests**

Shopan gave an account of how he tries to implement a speaking and listening test in the classroom:

In the curriculum there is a provision to assess students' speaking and listening skills through continuous assessment throughout the year, and I do so. I even take into consideration how students perform in the class. I try to speak in English most of the time and students are also interested in speaking. They try to speak in English and they like speaking. Many students are shy and afraid of speaking but I try to make the class very friendly.

I have seen that in many cases teachers do not assess students' speaking and listening skills. They just give an average mark based on the students' English marks. That was not the purpose of introducing the speaking and listening test. It was introduced so that students are encouraged to practice speaking and listening.

I tell my students that you need to improve your speaking and listening in English to face the world, to express your feelings. There are situations where only reading and writing may not enough. For example, if you go to a party or a meeting where people do not speak or understand Bangla, you cannot express yourself in writing. You need to talk and also you need to understand what people are saying.

You may go abroad for study or a job; so how will you interact with people if you cannot speak English? Even though speaking and listening are not important for the examination now, they are important for your future life.

Parvez argued that speaking and listening needed to be part of national examination as well:

Schools are instructed to assess students speaking and listening skills at the junior level. So I think a speaking and listening test will be added in the S.S.C and H.S.C examination soon.

Ten marks are allocated for dialogue writing in the J.SC, S.S.C and H.S.C examinations. If at least these marks can be allocated for oral testing to see how students perform orally, there will be a big shift in learning and teaching oral English. We have a culture that unless we are bound to do something we do not do it. Unless we see the immediate benefit we do not do anything.

Hasan also supported the idea of introducing speaking and listening in the examination. However, as noted in the previous chapter, he also expressed concern that if teachers are given the power to award marks towards students' final grad there might be discrimination and abusive use of the power. For example a teacher may not like a good student in the class, and award lower marks in the examination. There might be the cases where a teacher may force students to come to him for private tuition.

### **Using audio-video materials in class**

Apurbo, a secondary English teacher discussed how he used different audio and video materials in class to make the class more effective.

I use audio and video materials in my class. I find them very useful for teaching and students are also very interested. There are audio materials now available to download from the NCTB websites. These materials are developed based on the NCTB textbooks *English for Today* and are compatible with the textbooks. They teach students listening skills in the class and they are free to download from the NCTB website, where are instructions about how to use them. I downloaded many



of them onto my laptop and I also made a CD so that I can use them with the audio devices. I use them in class for teaching and I also use them for class tests.

The recent policy aims that have given rise to these initiatives and teacher's practices come as a response to the global power of English. In the following sections I discuss the importance of English in the lives of Bangladesh people and survey the ways it is instrumental in Bangladesh society. I include several accounts of several individual experiences and begin with Shanto's story.

### ***Shanto's story***

Shanto a 28 years old man, worked for a reputed private bank in Bangladesh. He had studied in Bangladesh and in the United Kingdom. He shared his experience of learning and using English and the challenges he has faced with learning at different stages of his life. I present his experiences as they highlight Bangladesh learners' difficulties in using English both in the country and abroad.

I attended school and college at my home town. It is a small town in the outskirts of the capital city. After the completion of my higher secondary I joined at a university admission coaching centre and appeared in the admission test in different public universities but I failed to obtain admission in any government university. Then I tried a second time the next year and in that year also I failed to get admission at any reputed public universities. However in that year I started my Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) at a reputed private university in Dhaka. I had a desire to go abroad for study and when I was in the final year of BBA, I took admission at an IELTS preparatory coaching centre and prepared for the IELTS examination. I got an offer to study Master of Business Administration (MBA) at a U.K. university and later I got a visa to go to the U.K. Apart from studying in the U. K. I also worked over there.

In terms of English language I faced various types of problems at different stages of my life. While I was a secondary and higher secondary level student, like my other classmates, I studied following the syllabus. I attended private tuitions and English was a challenging subject for me. For the university admission test, I

studied various types of analogy, grammatical rules, a lot of vocabulary - in fact the English section was always a tough part of the university admission test. Then when I studied in the private university, the medium of study was English and in the first year there were mandatory general English courses. Almost all the books I had to study in my undergraduate courses were in English. Sometimes we had to give class presentations which were also in English. The class lecture was supposed to be in English, though some of the teachers used a mix of Bangla and English to teach us. However, we were always encouraged to speak in English with each other when we were in the university campus. There were extra-curricular activities arranged so that we can improve our English. We had to use English in the examinations, assignments, and project report writing. Then I took preparation for the IELTS examination. In the U.K. in the first few months it was difficult for me to understand the class lectures and I struggled to understand native British speakers. I was not familiar with report writing and I also struggled to write assignments and the project report.

I have been working for the last three years in my present job in Bangladesh. Here I need to communicate with different parties. When I communicate orally or over the phone in almost all cases I communicate in Bangla. However I have to communicate quite frequently through mail and in that case I usually have to write in English. Besides the working language in my bank is English, and I need to use English quite often. I sometimes speak in English with my colleagues and clients, but only a few words or sentences. It feels like using some English is related to elitism and superiority. However, my stay and study in an English speaking country helps me to continue conversation in English even with the native speakers.

Shanto's account illustrates how Bangladesh students start to attach importance to English at an early age and then throughout academic life. When Bangladesh students move to an English speaking country be it for job or for further study, they face many challenges in terms of language. From Shanto's personal story I turn to an overview of the role English in public life of Bangladesh.

## **Importance of English in various sectors in Bangladesh**

Kachru (1992) presented a model showing the importance and function of English. He described the “types of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts” (p. 356). His model consisted of three circles. The inner circle consisted of countries where English was used as the native tongue, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The outer circle represented the countries where English was used as a second language and where English had spread as a result of British colonialism, including Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The expanding circle represented the countries where English was learned and taught as a foreign language and was gaining an important position as a vehicle for communicating with other nations. These countries included Japan, China, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia.

In this model Bangladesh was in the outer circle where English plays an important role. However there are debates whether English in Bangladesh should be considered as a second language or foreign language. Kachru (2005) has changed the status he earlier assigned to English in Bangladesh, stating: “Bangladesh has not adopted a consistent policy towards the role of English; and it falls between an ESL & EFL country” (p.67). Philipson (1992) expressed similar concern regarding the role of English in Bangladesh. He noted that Bangladesh should be categorised as an English as a second language (ESL) country, but due to the children’s insufficient exposure to English teaching in Bangladesh should be organised like teaching a foreign language’ (EFL).

English is being used in Bangladesh for various purposes. Banu and Sussex (2001) noted that English played a significant role in sectors like business, tourism, administration, communication, science, technology, education and in media. Rasheed (2012) noted many reasons for learning English in Bangladesh, mainly “passing school exams, going on to further study, learning about world literature, increasing employment opportunities (either in Bangladesh or overseas), communicating with foreigners, using internet and emails, and travelling to other countries” (p. 33).

The official language of Bangladesh is Bangla and in government sectors the language of internal communication is also Bangla. However, English is used frequently. In every job placement examination for Bangladesh Civil Services (BCS) the candidates have to prove

their English skills either in written examination or through multiple choice questions. Most of the ministries have their websites in English along with Bangla and these are updated regularly. Although the language of lower courts in Bangladesh is Bangla, the Bangladesh High Court and Supreme Court use English as the working language.

English is used as the language of international communication. Bangladesh has strong ties with the many countries in the world. It has foreign missions in many countries and at least fifty countries have their diplomatic offices in Bangladesh. It also maintains diplomatic relationships with many countries through post and e-mail. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). The country has strong connections with various international and multilateral organisations including United Nations, European Union, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and International Monetary Fund. English is the official language of communication with these countries. The use of English has increased significantly since 1990 due to the growth in international trade, garment industries, globalisation and satellite television (Imam, 2005). Banu and Sussex (2001) noted that due to dependence on foreign aid for its development projects, Bangladesh needed to maintain regular correspondence in English with foreign offices.

Many multinational companies (such as Samsung, Lever brothers) are now operating their regional offices in Bangladesh and many more giants like Google and Facebook are planning to open offices soon. Moreover, many international chain hotels, financial companies and international aid agencies are now operating in the country. These organisations mostly use English in their official correspondence. Bangladesh has to rely to a great extent for donor funding on developed countries and organisations. Communicating with various donor agencies and other countries is almost exclusively in English. Moreover every year a good number of Bangladesh civil forces join UN peace keeping missions in different countries where they need to work along with other countries' troops where English is the main language of communication.

In the next section I report further individual stories that illustrate the importance of English in access to higher education, career entry and business.

### ***Luna's story: English in education***

Luna completed her primary schooling from her village and secondary and higher secondary schooling from a small town girls high school and college. She did not get an overall A+ in the S.S.C and H.S.C, but she got A+ in English in examinations. This is exceptional as the most feared subject in Bangladesh is English, and students fail to achieve good results due to the poor performance in English. She was admitted to one of the public universities in Bangladesh to study B.A (Hons) in English. Many of her classmates had studied in the reputed schools and colleges in the capital and other big cities and some came from English medium schools. She was one of the students from a rural background and at the beginning of her university life she found it a bit difficult to adjust to the new environment. She shared an experience from the beginning of her undergraduate study:

I was one of the quiet students. One day a teacher asked everyone in the class to write a composition on a given topic. In the next class he called up some students and explained the mistakes they had made in their writing and expressed his concern regarding the overall quality of writing. He then asked me to come to his desk. He inquired about my previous study and asked me where I learned English. How did my teacher teach English in the school? I then explained that my father taught me English from my childhood. He taught me grammatical rules and writing and then asked me to write. Then when I wrote something my father checked and explained what mistakes I had made, and sometimes he gave me some clues of my mistakes and asked me to check and find the mistakes. I used to practice speaking English with him. He was a government high school English teacher. My university teacher told me at that time that he was really surprised to see my writing although I was not from one of the prestigious schools and colleges.

Throughout my university life English was always a big factor. All the assignments and examinations were in English. In my final year I had to write a small research paper in English. In my university in the science and business faculty the medium of study was also English. We were required to write in English in the examination, class presentations and assignments and in the final thesis or project report.

Luna's story highlights the importance of English in the education sector in Bangladesh. Primary education consists of five years of formal schooling. English is studied from class I and it is one of the mandatory subjects at primary level. Over 17 million children attend primary education in Bangladesh, which makes it one of the largest centralised primary education systems in the world.

After Independence in 1971 English was not studied from Class I. English was again introduced in class I in 1992, although the Bangladesh Education and Research Extension Committee recommended English be introduced in Class III or Class VI depending on the availability of English teachers (Hamid & Honan, 2012). Ahmed (2005) and Yasmin (2005) also noted that policy in Bangladesh forced children to learn English when they were still learning their first language. In primary school regular primary teachers teach English. At the end of every academic year students sit for the year end examination which is conducted by the respective school for assessment and promotion to the next class. At the end of Class V students sit for the Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE).

Secondary education comprises of five years of formal study from class VI to X and higher secondary education is for two years, classes XI and XII. English is a compulsory subject at the secondary and higher secondary level.

Studies (such as Sultana, 2004) found that after twelve years of formal study students' English skills are not satisfactory and they have acquired very little communicative ability.

The national educational policy, 2010, recommended an English version of the national curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2010). Rahman (2015) stated that many schools have started offering schooling in English medium under the national curriculum, although these kinds of schools are only available in the city area. In addition, there are hundreds of English medium private schools where students study under the British or American curricula and they usually attend Cambridge O level and A level examinations.

In higher education the medium of study in most of the cases is English. Since the Private University Acts were passed in 1992, 82 private universities have been established. All these universities use English as a medium of study except for a very few subjects like

Bangla. Apart from private universities there are 40 public universities (University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, n.d.) in Bangladesh and most of the universities offer many of their courses in English.

In the public universities most of the subjects especially Business, Engineering, Medicine Dentistry, Science and Agriculture are studied in English. Choudhury (Choudhury cited in Hamid, 2009) stated:

Bengali has failed to be an adequate medium for higher education, particularly because almost 95 percent of the necessary text and reference books happen to be in English (p. 34).

Moreover Bachelors and Master degrees in English literature and linguistics are offered in most mainstream universities and in colleges under the National University. Some universities offer general English courses for first year undergraduate students. These courses are often called Intensive English, Foundation English, Pre-intermediate English and their main aim is to improve students' overall English skills. Some universities have their own separate department or institution to offer these courses. For example, Dhaka University, the most renowned university, has its own institution called the Institute of Modern Language (IML) which offers such pre-intermediate courses in English for undergraduate students. Similarly BRAC Language institute offers similar courses for its students. Sultana (2014) noted that *Dhaka University Studies, the Journal of the Institute of Modern Language* and *Harvest*, the journal of English language and literature show that most research has been written in English. Her study also found that the students of both private and government universities needed to use English extensively for understanding class lectures, answering questions in class, writing answers in examinations and talking to teachers.

Bangladesh students have keen interest in studying abroad. A foreign degree is valued highly in the country. Many people consider going to any first world country for study and later they sometimes decide to settle there.

I had the chance to talk to Luna's father about how he used to teach his daughter. Her father shared some of his experiences and thoughts:

I taught her in my own way. I wanted her to develop her overall English skills, not just helping her to do well in the examination. But she did very well in English at the S.S.C and H.S.C examination as well. I taught her basic English and grammar, encouraged her to develop her vocabulary, and gave her different topics so that she could practice writing. I introduced her to literature at an early age and encouraged her to study English literature. Whenever I was with her I tried to speak English with her. She studied and took preparation for the examination in her own way and attended school regularly like the other students. Because of my profession most of the time I had to stay out of my house and only came to the family at the weekend. I just helped her during weekends when I came home.

He told me that in the present syllabus at secondary level there is no literature. Although there are some poems in the textbooks, they are not important for the examination. If something is not important for the examination, he asked, do you think students in Bangladesh will read it? He expressed his opinion that if there were questions in the examination related to literary texts, students would then be motivated to study them. 'If we are not introducing our students to the English literature we are not introducing our students to good English writing,' he said.

He also pointed out that we should think carefully before introducing or eliminating something from the curriculum and syllabus. For example at the beginning of the introduction of communicative language teaching there were no grammar in the examination. It was then noticed that students had no interest to study grammar and their grammatical knowledge plummeted. "I think these changes are made suddenly without even informing teachers like us who actually teach in the class. I am a government school teacher and I came to know those changes once they have already been implemented." This observation accords with many of the problems associated with the examination process examined in the previous chapter.

### ***Migrant workers and need of English: Sajib's story***

The following narrative from Sajib, a technical worker, describes his experience of the difficulties Bangladesh migrant workers face abroad when they have limited English ability:



After finishing high school I was looking for a job as a technical worker. By this time I had completed training courses from a technical centre in Bangladesh. My main target was to go abroad for work. I knew I have to work abroad to earn good money. I was interviewed twice by a delegate from Singapore. The interview was in English and there was an interpreter at that time. I studied English in school and college but my English was not good at all. This was the subject I was always afraid of. I had to make a CV and other documents in English before applying for the job, though I took help from a friend. After few months I got a job at Singapore.

This was the first time I was travelling abroad and I was really afraid. I faced the first difficulty in the flight. The air hostess came to me and asked what I wanted to eat. I realised that she was asking my choice but I did not say anything as I was not sure how to request something or even what the name of the food was. In fact she was saying something but I did not understand anything. She then gave me a meal and I was just saying okay though I had no idea what she was giving me and whether I could eat it.

Life for me abroad was very challenging at the beginning. I required help in many cases like buying something, opening a bank account, filling in a form, making an appointment with the doctor, writing an application. In fact the list is very long.

For some of my friends in Singapore the situation was worse and even embarrassing. One day a friend asked the salesperson for rice, vegetables and four eggs. He did not know the word *egg* so unconsciously he said that in Bangla. There were some other friends in the shop at that time and some of them started laughing. Though I thought later that we should not laugh, at that moment as it was very embarrassing for him.

In the workplace we work with multicultural people. We need to interact with them frequently. I have to listen to my supervisor's instruction and need to do accordingly. Sometimes I need to ask them if I fail to understand any instruction. Then in the job I have to communicate in English with fellow workers and because they are from different countries English is the only option to communicate. There were many occasions when my supervisor became angry with me. One day he asked me to do some work, but I did not do it. Later he came and became very

angry. The reason I did not do it was not an unwillingness to do the job; rather I did not understand what the supervisor's instruction was.

I feel that in my career English is a big barrier to get to a higher position. If I would have better English skills I may have a higher position than where I am now, maybe supervisor or team leader, whereas I am still working as a general technician.

Adult unemployment rates in Bangladesh are significant. Every year more adult job seekers, unskilled and illiterate as well as graduates, are adding to the existing numbers. However new jobs are not opening to keep pace. For a better future more and more adults are now exploring migration opportunities and searching for jobs abroad. Statistics from the Bureau of Manpower and Employment (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, n. d.) indicate that almost 9.2 million Bangladesh workers are currently working abroad and these include professional, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. On top of that many people have opted to go abroad in illegal ways. Moreover, a number of students go to study overseas and many of them settle abroad permanently.

The contribution of foreign remittance that these people send has a great impact on Bangladesh's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Bangladesh is a high receiver of foreign remittance. In the fiscal year 2011-12 the contribution of foreign remittance to the country's GDP was 11%. Nevertheless, lack of language skills among Bangladesh migrants is one of the big barriers to achieve their goals. Buchenau (2008) noted the difficulties that migrant workers face in seeking medical and legal help is due to the lack of language skills. International Organization for Migration (2002) identified a lack of language skills as a barrier for career development for migrant workers. They stated that even minimal knowledge of English would enable technical workers to secure better jobs. Rubdy and McKay (2013) noted that Bangladeshis are placed low on the hierarchy of knowing English compared to migrants workers from the Philippines or Malaysia and thus often face discrimination. The Bangladesh government initiatives to reform education and the curriculum for English are directed to address this gap.

### ***Business and banking: Kamal's story***

Komol, a banker, works at a well-known private bank in Bangladesh. Because of his job he has to deal with different kinds of people.

I have the experience of working in different sections of the bank including the foreign dealing section. Although I am not required to speak English for communication much as most of the customers speak Bangla, some people, especially educated people, try to make small conversation in English. I have to do lot of written communication in English like sending and receiving transfer advice from one bank to another, filling different forms. In fact the working language in my bank is English.

I attended various in-job training and all the documents and papers that I was required to read and write were in English. In everyday banking also most of the frequently used words are in English like deposit, credit, payment, TT, DD, interest, loan, credit card, debit card, check and many more and these words have become very familiar in Bangladesh even to the uneducated people. In most cases checks and deposits slips are written in English. Job titles in the bank are mostly in English like General Manager, Branch Manager, Regional Manager, Senior Officer, Officer, Cashier. So too are terms like corporate business banking, loan sections, despatch, SME, mobile banking.

Now almost every bank in Bangladesh provides their customers' bank statements in English. Those who work in the branches that deal with the foreign countries' banks requires even more correspondence in English. Bangladesh has great business ties with many countries in the world. Bangladesh exports a large number of readymade garments and textiles and similarly Bangladesh imports many raw materials from different countries. In those businesses banks require regular correspondence for letters of credit and transferring money. Not every branch has these kind of banking but many branches do. That requires

correspondence in writing as well as sometimes verbal communication over the phone.

While Komol's narrative highlights the importance of English in the banking sector, many other areas of business in Bangladesh also use English.

The main business in Bangladesh is the readymade garment industry. Bangladesh is one of the largest exporters of readymade garments and textile products in the world. This industry has business with Europe, America, Australia and New Zealand where the language of communication is English. The garments and textile industry in Bangladesh employ staffs who are good communicators in English to work with the foreign buyers and understand their requirements.

Many multinational companies have business in Bangladesh including Unilever, Reckitt Benkeiser, Glaxosmithkline and Nestle. Staff, especially those who are in charge of maintaining liaison with other countries, need to use English in day to day communication. Almost all these companies have their websites in English and they publish their various annual reports in English.

Furthermore, Bangladesh has a strong bilateral trade agreement with many countries in Europe, America and Australia. Local export includes vegetables, jute and handicrafts products, fish and tea, and Bangladesh imports automobile parts, machineries, toiletries. To carry out this trade English plays an important role in communication.

Apart from multinational companies, reputed local companies also widely use English as their working language. Companies like Square Group, Noman Group, Pran Group and many more use English widely in their everyday business operations. In fact it is rare to find a company's website in Bangla. Even the well-known company, Arong, that is famous for producing products representing Bangladesh culture and heritage has its website in English and explains its various products in English. The importance of English can also be seen in recent outsourcing work in Bangladesh. Conferences, seminars and exhibitions are held frequently to introduce or promote different products and services, and people from different countries participate in these. In those programmes the working language and the language of presentation is almost always English.

### ***Mitul's Story: Job-seeking***

Mitul recently graduated from one of the public universities in Bangladesh and was preparing for the various recruitment examinations. She described how she felt about her need for English in her future life:

One thing is common: in every job you need to have good English skills. Whatever the job, they test a candidate's English skills. If I want to compete in the BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) examination, I have to prove my English skills in different stages. In the preliminary examination there will be multiple choice questions about grammar, idioms and literature. If I can pass successfully to the next stage there will be written examinations where English is one of the core subjects for everyone. Then there viva where most of the questions are asked in English.

I have applied for a bank job and the recruitment examination is more or less the same with a great emphasis on English. Next month I am sitting for the Non-Government Teacher's Registration Examination (NTRCA) examination, which recruits teachers for the non-government schools and colleges where English is also very important. So far I have attended three job interviews for executive jobs in three reputed private companies and the interview board asked me questions in English.

If my English skill was better I would have done much better in my undergraduate and postgraduate grades. I am a science graduate and in our examination we were always required to answer in English. We were also required to submit assignments in English and for some courses we had oral presentations that we had to do in English. Most of our textbooks and reference books are in English. Sometimes there were viva examination for some courses and the teacher always asks questions in English.

Along with searching for job in Bangladesh, I am also exploring higher education and scholarship opportunities in some reputed universities in the western world.

Again the big barrier for me is to get a good score in the IELTS examination. I am also finding difficulties to present my personal study goal and initial research proposal in writing. I feel that my English is not good enough.

Mitul's narrative highlights the importance of English in tertiary education. Her struggle with communicating in English is to some extent of her schooling experience.

Because the current S.S.C and H.S.C examinations only assess students' reading and writing skills a student with no oral proficiency in English may get A+. Based on their result students get the chance apply for admission to one of the reputed medical colleges, engineering universities, or public universities.

Getting entry to the top universities in Bangladesh is highly competitive. In the year 2015 in Dhaka University's admission test 254,404 students competed for the 6,685 places which means 38 students competed for the each place. In 2014, 46 students competed for the each place (The Daily Star, 2015). To compete in these highly competitive admission tests many students start studying at the university admission coaching centres immediately after the H.S.C examination.

Job recruitment examinations are also very competitive. For example in the 36th BCS examination 211,326 candidates competed for the 2,180 posts (The Daily Observer, 2016). In the BCS and other government recruitment tests English is one of the core subjects.

In almost every job in Bangladesh candidates with better English skills get preference. Some well-known companies regularly arrange training to improve English skills for their employees. There are many training centres in Bangladesh that offer specially designed corporate English training. Sultana (2014) highlighted the importance of English for private job sector, stating: "Private companies prefer to employ university graduates with a higher level of proficiency in English" (p. 17). Farooqui (2010) also emphasised the importance of having good proficiency in English to obtain a good job in Bangladesh, stating that a candidate has to compete in competitive recruitment examination where English is one of the compulsory subjects.

Nowadays more jobs are advertised in English than Bangla. A search in the popular job advertisement portals reveals that job advertisement in English is dominant.

English Billboards and shop names are common in most cities, as are eye catching slogans in English. The image below shows shops' names, addresses, and phone numbers written in English.



**Figure 5.3: A view of one of the famous roads in Dhaka (Collected)**

The Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Air Force and many private universities and English medium schools use English in commercials.

Many private companies now publish their annual report in English. Khan (1999) reported the extensive number of newspapers published in Bangladesh and the availability in urban areas of international newspapers and magazines like *The Times*, *The Economist*, *Newsweek*, *Reader's Digest*. At least ten daily newspapers publish in English.

### **English in science and research**

There is a dilemma of what should be the medium of study for science. At the secondary and higher secondary level students study science in Bangla. Textbooks are written in Bangla and students also answer in Bangla in the examinations. However, there is also an English version of the national curriculum which allows students to study the same curriculum in English medium.

At the university level in Bangladesh, on the other hand, the medium of study in science related subjects is English. A good number of journals related to science, agriculture, technology, engineering and medicine are published in English. For example, the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council, the regulatory authority of medical study in

Bangladesh records in their website the approved journals in medical and dentistry published in Bangladesh and all the approved journals are published in English. English language offers a way to communicate with the wider world and to present results to the wider community. It is a way of getting recognition internationally.

### **A continuing gap**

A lack of cohesion is apparent between policy objectives for reform in English teaching and current practices. Although English curriculum at secondary level in Bangladesh places importance on acquiring all four language skills and puts importance on effectively using English in real life communication, there is a media and academic outcry about the decline of overall competency in school graduates' English. For example in the admission test of the Dhaka University only two out of 1364 candidates successfully gained admission to the department of English (Habib, & Chakraborty, 2014). Shamsi Akter, a university teacher who teaches one of the foundation English classes for the first year students, expressed her disappointment with the first year students' writing ability:

I ask my students to write a short paragraph on a given topic and I was really disappointed to see the students' overall writing ability though most of them achieved GPA 5 at the secondary and higher secondary level.

On the one hand university academics are complaining about the decline of English skills among students, and on the other hand the number of GPA 5 in the secondary and higher secondary education is increasing every year.

McKey (2003, p.15) stated: "CLT has been largely promoted in ELT in Inner Circle Countries and in private English language institutes in Outer and Expanding Circle Countries. In using this method, typically a great premium is placed on using group work to develop students' spoken English." Various researchers (Philipson, 1992; Li, 1998) argued that methodology developed in a western country's context is sometimes difficult to implement in EFL or ESL country's context. So, they contended, instead of relying on methodology developed by the west, EFL and ESL countries should employ their researchers to develop methodology considering the different socio political and contextual factors.



In Bangladesh CLT has been adopted in the curriculum and teachers are encouraged to follow CLT in their teaching. Many projects also have been initiated to train teachers in to use CLT, but in reality speaking and listening seem to be ignored by teachers and students for multiple reasons. Thus there is lack of cohesion between policy, the aim of the curriculum and the implementation of the curriculum. Almost twenty years ago CLT was adopted as a language teaching methodology in Bangladesh. It is now time to question whether CLT is a suitable methodology in Bangladesh context.

As the English Curriculum 2012 recognised, qualified and trained teachers are the most important element in implementing a communicative based curriculum. At present there is acute shortage of qualified and trained English teachers at the secondary level in Bangladesh. Comparing with the urban areas the problem is more severe in the rural areas.

Teacher, like Emdad and Saiful described earlier in this chapter, are representative of those who do attempt to implement the aims and objectives of the curriculum. However, teaching at the secondary level in Bangladesh is still predominantly teacher-centred and traditional grammar based. Various researchers (Hasan, 2004; Chowdhury, 2010; Hasan, 2014) reported English teachers' traditional teaching practices at the secondary level. The BANBEIS (2015) database shows that 52.8% of the teachers working as an English teacher at the secondary level have only a B.A (Pass) degree with 100 marks of compulsory English in their Bachelor degree, and 23.91% of the teachers did not even study English at their Bachelor level. EIA (2009) conducted a baseline survey which assessed English teachers' oral proficiency in Bangladesh found that many teachers are teaching at a higher level than their own English level.

Thus developing these huge teaching force's pedagogical as well as language skills requires long term planning for training. In the next chapter I will discuss the existing training provision of secondary English teachers in Bangladesh.

A core problem is the lack of opportunities learners get at the secondary level to practice English. CLT is, as Harmer (2007) stated, is related to how language is used in real life situations. Rather than focusing only on grammar, CLT is more related to developing learners' communicative competence. Learners are encouraged to use various forms of language in various contexts such as ordering food in a restaurant, purchasing groceries

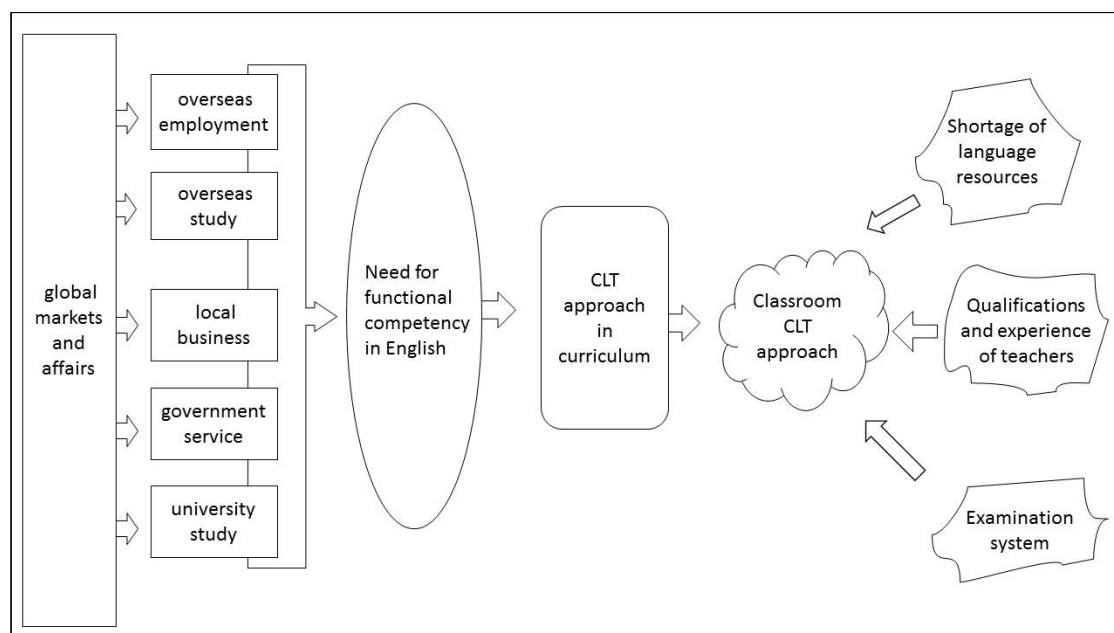
in supermarket, asking for directions, proposing, denying, and whole range of other activities. Although English is used in business and higher education Bangladesh is a predominantly monolingual country and in rural areas especially Bangla is the medium of oral communication. English dialogue is largely limited to English classrooms. There is a lack of an environment where students get a chance to practice English. As presented earlier in this chapter there are initiatives from teachers to create English environments by forming English clubs, arranging English debates, language clubs, arranging English movie shows, encouraging students to write for a school magazine. In these activities students get opportunities to practice English, but these practices are not common. Talking about the absence of an English-speaking environment, Abdur Rahim, an English teacher of a girls' high school, said:

It is very unusual to see two girls speaking English with each other in the road when they are coming to school. They do not do this as they are afraid of what others will think about them. They may be victims of bullying and derogatory comments. Also in small towns and villages it is unusual that people speak English in the family. In the school also if there is any chance to speak English, it is in the English class. But even in the English class students do not speak much. So practising English is very limited in our country's context.

### **Overview of the emergent themes**

As this chapter has detailed there is demand for Bangladesh people to acquire English language competency both with the country and for trade, work and study overseas. In recognition of this demand government policy has introduced a range of initiatives to improve the teaching and learning of English in schools. The adoption of a CLT approach in the curriculum is an overarching policy initiative. The degree to which this policy decision had been successfully implemented in practice is contested in published research and in media opinion. The narratives offered in this chapter point to active efforts by some teachers to make language come alive in their classrooms and failure to do so by others. They also indicate some of the factors that influence the way the CLT policy is enacted.

The following model summarises factors that have influenced the adoption of a CLT approach and factors that influence its implementation in classrooms.



**Figure 5.4: Factors that influence implementation of CLT**

In the model the drive for English competency comes from global forces in terms of trade, development, politics and opportunities for study and work. Within the country these global forces are translated into conditions of university study, conditions for entry into government service, the needs of business, and the obvious preconditions for acceptance for overseas study and work. These forces have led to policy acknowledgment of the need to develop functional competency in English language in school students. The CLT approach has become the official approach to English curriculum. The implementation of the curriculum in classrooms is impacted by a range of factors, particularly by the availability of resources for creating communicative and real life English language contexts, the qualifications and knowledge and experience of teachers, and the ways learning is examined. Each of these three factors could be enablers. If there are problems associated with them they become barriers.

Language resources have been examined in this chapter. The constraints of the examination system were examined in the previous chapter and revisited in this one. The next chapter focuses on the provision of training for teachers.

## **Chapter Six: Training provisions for secondary English teachers in Bangladesh**

The two previous chapters highlighted the tension between the operational curriculum and that which has been official mandated. Chapter Four examined how the national examination system creates an operational curriculum that does not match the aspirations of educational policy. Chapter Five focused on the functional needs and use of English in different sectors and how the functional needs have been addressed in the curriculum and in the classroom practices. This chapter focuses on the training, pre-service and in-service, provided for secondary English teachers. Qualified and trained teachers are considered as essential to effect the changes in English teaching and learning planned in national education policy. Since the adoption of a communicative approach to language teaching, initiatives have been taken to train teachers to teach English in this approach, and particularly to use multimedia equipment in their teaching. This chapter starts with extracts from an interview with a highly respected teacher trainer. Then I draw on my observations, the information given by my participants, and accounts in related literature to report different training initiatives for the English teachers in Bangladesh. This is followed by a range of teachers' comments about the benefits and pitfalls of trainings. At the end of the chapter I highlight some emerging issues and present an illustrative narrative of how a teacher from a rural school involves himself in professional development activities through his personal initiatives.

### ***Nikhil***

Nikhil, a teacher trainer specialising in English teaching, has been working for the Ministry of Education for the last 18 years. He is a well-educated teacher educator who completed B.A. (Hons) and M.A. in English from a prestigious university in Bangladesh and received a diploma in the field of education. After joining the teaching profession he completed his Master of Education from a well reputed foreign university and an M.Phil from a public university in Bangladesh. He is actively involved in research and writing

about language teaching issues. For example, he is one of the researchers of a government funded research project that has resulted in revision of the duration of the class time at the secondary and higher secondary levels. Besides his teaching job he contributes to national daily newspapers on the issue of education and particularly about English teaching and learning. In our interview he shared his experiences of teaching in short training programmes as well as his regular teaching duties in the Teachers Training College's core programme.

Nikhil explained that he tries to maintain a network with his students and the trainee teachers. He goes beyond conducting a short training to establishing a long term relationships with his graduates.

I keep contact with them through various ways and specially through social media and there are some benefits for everyone. Sometimes I need them as research participants. When they leave the training they are overwhelmed with the new ideas and teaching methods. Some of them personally contact me and tell me how they have benefitted from the training. Many of them inform me that since the training they have a feeling that they need to learn more to improve their teaching. They tell me what they do with their students, how much their students love different interactive activities like language game, puzzles, group work and pair work, how they use the NCTB prescribed textbook, *English for Today*, in their teaching. From the feedback I must say for some teacher training is really beneficial, though we do not have any statistics or quality assessment to see how it works and what are the benefits.

I help my students in many ways even after the class time. I try to build up a friendly relationship. My students' writings were published in the newspaper. I see how interested my students are; if they are interested in learning they will find ways of learning. My first job is to raise enthusiasm among students.

Nikhil reported that he introduces the trainee teachers to various new kinds of teaching activities like group work, pair work, language games and mind mapping. He encourages teachers to demonstrate different teaching activities in the micro teaching sessions and he provokes the other participants to give feedback and suggestions to their colleagues. Technological support and multimedia equipment are available in the training room and

he uses these in his teaching. He shows trainees different teaching activities thorough video clips and posters. He uses these to show different communicative classroom activities. After showing a small clip he asks his trainees questions like *What was the aim of this activity? Why did the teacher do this? What is good about it? What was he missing? What other alternative or best way for that?* He explores how to use the NCTB textbooks in the class and what to do with the different pictures and activities given in the book.

He explained that he devotes time to making students feel safe and willing to interact:

At the beginning of the class I play some language games to bring my students' attention in the class. I sometimes ask my students if anyone of them can sing a song or tell a nice joke. Sometimes I do some physical exercise with all the students. I do all these to bring students' attention in the class. At the beginning of the class students sometimes feel drowsy or sleepy in the class. So I try to make them active and lively with all these activities. When they are joyful after some of these activities then I move to the lesson.

He further explained how he strived to make his teaching successful.

In the short training it is usually difficult to cover a detailed syllabus, but my main intention is to raise inquisitiveness and passion for learning among trainees, introduce the important aspects of teaching and learning, encourage them to work in collaboration during the training and create networks and collaboration after the training.

There are shortages of materials, but there are opportunities as well. For example, I take many resources from the internet and from real life situations like newspapers and books. I use social media as a means of group activities. In this way even when my students finish courses they keep in touch with me. If a student writes something I ask others to make comments and then I give some suggestions and I ask them to rewrite it. It is so effective that some of the writings are published in the local newspaper.

Nikhil expressed concern about secondary English teachers' poor language skills, and argued that those English teachers whose English skill is not good should not be allowed to teach English:

Teaching effectively in the communicative language approach requires teachers to have a good command over English. I am not talking about sacking the weak ones from the job, rather identifying the teachers with poor language skills and then arranging special courses to help them develop their language skills. In order to teach they need to first develop their own language skills. Making a cluster locally where teachers from nearby schools will come and share their ideas may help, and the government needs to arrange training locally.

Nikhil's experiences and practices may serve as an illustrative example of a dedicated teachers' trainer, who despite difficulties, strives to prepare teachers for the challenges of teaching English in a Bangladeshi classroom and to improve teaching and learning in Bangladesh. However, as Nikhil acknowledged, not all English teachers have a rich range of teaching strategies, and so arranging necessary professional development activities including training is essential.

### **Secondary English teachers in Bangladesh**

As I observed in my class visits, and as is reported in the literature (Hasan, 2004; Hasan, 2013; Islam, 2015), it is often the case in a secondary school in Bangladesh that a teacher comes into the class, students stand up, and then they sit in rows with three or four on one bench. It is a common scenario to have 60 to 100 students in a class. In the English class, teachers often start by writing some grammar rules in the board and students copy from the board silently. Teachers suggest some important topics for letter composition and paragraphs and students write them down. Or maybe the teacher discusses strategies for answering different questions in the examination. The class generally finishes in 30 to 35 minutes although the allocated time for the class is 45 minutes. Sometimes teachers finish early because they have to go to another class immediately after finishing this one. Taking five or six classes in a day is quite normal. On top of taking classes teachers have to do other administrative duties, such as checking various examination scripts within a very short time frame. To support their families teachers undertake private tutoring before or after the school time. Amid this busy schedule there is a limited scope for

teachers to engage in professional development activities. Moreover, there is no provision for any professional development activities to be acknowledged for promotion or for any other recognition. Attending seminars, conferences or publishing scholarly writings are not common practices for secondary school teachers in Bangladesh, and such activities would be quite unfamiliar for rural teachers. However, as the narrative at the end of this chapter will show, there are exceptional teachers who, despite living in a remote area, make every effort to improve their teaching and to develop themselves professionally. One such an initiative is reported in Alam (2016) where in a remote rural school in Bangladesh the head teacher, teachers and students worked collaboratively to improve practice. Teachers showed enthusiasm and desire to develop themselves professionally and made an effort to make their teaching effective with an aim to bring about better educational outcomes.

### **Pre- service teacher education in Bangladesh**

“Do we have pre- service teacher courses in our country?” I asked a group of Bangladesh teacher educators and administrators. The question sparked a lively discussion where some said that we have pre- service courses and others says no we have nothing that can be really be called pre-service teacher education. Their different opinions are reflection of somewhat makeshift teacher education and selection procedures. In this section I will summarise the existing degrees and courses that students of Bangladesh usually complete before becoming teachers.

The minimum qualification required to become a secondary school teacher in Bangladesh is to pass a three year Bachelor degree, and those who pass a three years Bachelor degree with English are eligible to teach English at the secondary level. In addition, those who graduate with B.A. (Hons) in English or have completed an M.A. in English can also become English teachers.

For a B.A (Pass) course<sup>4</sup> students generally study in any National University affiliated college. In the National University’s three years Bachelor degree English is just one of

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<sup>4</sup> A Pass course consists of 3 years of study whereas an Hons course consists of four years.



several subjects. Students are required to study prose, poetry, and grammar, and students' reading, writing and grammatical knowledge are assessed through final examination. There is no provision for assessing students' oral or listening skills in the examination. On the other hand, in a B.A (Hons) course in English students study English over the whole four year period. Depending on the university, they study English literature, a combination of English literature and language, or just English language. Almost all the public and private universities in Bangladesh offer a four years B.A (Hons) programme in English and one year M.A in English. Studying B.A (Hons) in a reputed public university in Bangladesh is very competitive and places are in high demand. English is considered as one of the top subjects in the Arts and Humanities faculty of almost every university in Bangladesh. In general it is likely that because of the time spent studying English and nature of the courses, graduates of B.A (Hons) in English from reputed universities will have better English skills than those with a B.A (Pass) degree from a National University affiliated college. However, these are general university degrees which are not designed to train potential teachers. Graduates of these courses can apply for many other jobs as well as for teaching.

The institutes of Education and Research of several government universities, such as Dhaka University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, offer a four years Bachelor in Education degree. The government Teachers Training Colleges (TTCs) recently started a four years Bachelor in Education degree under the National University. These courses focus in education in general and teaching and learning but again graduates of these courses can apply for many other jobs. It is not the case that all these graduates will be teachers in the future.

Many of these institutions, especially the TTCs, offer a one year Bachelor in Education (B.Ed), mainly for the In- Service teachers. However, fresh graduates of different subjects can apply to do one year B.Ed even if they do not have any teaching experience. Naresh Voumik, a teacher trainer of a government training institute expressed his concern stating that fresh graduates who are admitted for B.Ed training without any teaching experience often do not come because they really want to be teacher.

Some students enrol for B.Ed course at TTC when they are looking for jobs but could not get any job. So rather than spending idle time they consider that it is

better to do a course as it may be of some benefit in the future. This lack of motivation becomes apparent when in many cases these students leave the course if they get any kind of job while they are in the course.

Khan, another government teacher trainer made a similar comment about the fresh graduates' choice to enrol for one year B.Ed course.

There are many reasons for fresh graduates to enrol for B.Ed course. When they are unemployed after graduation they think that it is better to do something rather than remain unemployed. For them it is an opportunity to stay in the college hostel, and opportunity to stay in the city which is convenient for them to search for jobs. Above all they are completing a degree that could be of some use.

A female graduate, Halima, who graduated from a Geology course, admitted herself into a B.Ed course in one of the government teachers training colleges recently, and in an informal interview she admitted that she enrolled herself in the B.Ed course at the TTC as it gives her the opportunity to stay in the college hostel of the TTC in the city, which she considers safe and secure for her. She admitted that she can attend the job recruitment coaching centre easily if she lives in the city.

To recruit teachers for the government secondary schools a special recruitment examination is carried out throughout the country. For the non-government high schools there is no such recruitment examination at the national level. Instead a person needs to pass the Non-Government Teachers' Registration and Certification authority (NTRCA) examination (Non-Government Teachers' Registration and Certification Authority, 2017). Teachers are then recruited from those who hold the NTRCA registration number by the school committee following government guidelines. After joining a school, a teacher needs to complete a one year B.Ed programme from one of the teacher training colleges. A significant number of teachers start teaching English without having any professional training. Sometimes teachers of other subjects teach English due to the shortage of English teachers in secondary schools.

In most developed countries a person needs to graduate from an accredited teacher training provider and then is required to be registered as a teacher before starting their teaching career. In New Zealand, for example, to become a primary, secondary or early

childhood teacher a person needs to graduate from an approved initial teacher education provider, and they then receive the provisional teacher registration. After a certain period of teaching and fulfilling other required criteria a teacher can get full registration. Teachers need to renew their registration after a certain period depending on the types of licence they hold (Education Council, New Zealand).

Sahlberg (2010) addressed how Finland became one of the leading OECD countries in educational achievement. He related the success to the excellent teachers' education system in Finland. In Finland, as Sahlberg argued, teaching is one of the highly sought professions among the young. Only the best and the brightest students get a chance to become a teacher. Teacher education programmes in Finland are designed in a way so that even before starting a teaching career a teacher can acquire sound theoretical and professional knowledge, and all the school teachers in Finland are offered systematic professional development.

Some of the developing countries also put strong emphasis on teacher education. Malaysia, for example, mandated that all teachers in the secondary level need to have a Bachelor degree in Education. Candidates for the pre-service teacher training programme needs to go through a rigorous selection process and only those who met the entry criteria and have strong desire to become a teacher are selected for the pre-service teacher education programme (Mokshein, Ahmad, & Vongalis-Macrow, 2009).

Wei, Darling-Hammond & Adamson (2010) stated that short term, workshop-based teacher training courses are unlikely to bring about changes in teachers' professional development and in students' outcomes, and they argued that it requires long term and sustained investment of time and money into teachers' education to see positive outcomes in terms of teachers' professional development. Broad and Evan (2006) expressed a similar view, stating that effective professional development programmes are those that are sustained, on-going and in-depth, whereas short term, *one-shot* programmes are ineffective to bring about changes in teachers' practices.

A number of research studies address the need for integration of ICT into teacher training. UNESCO (2002) stated that

Designing and implementing successful ICT-enabled teacher education programmes is the key to fundamental, wide-ranging educational reforms (p.4).

UNESCO (2002) further stressed that Pre-Service and In-Service teachers' basic ICT skills and competencies are essential if a country wants to take the maximum benefit of the inclusion of ICT in the education system. Unwin (2005) while examining the integration of ICT in education in Africa and the reality in the classroom highlighted the importance of integrating ICT in teaching, emphasising the need to provide trainee teachers with opportunities to experience innovative technology supported learning environments during their teacher education courses. Among other initiatives to integrate ICT in education in Bangladesh, the recent initiative is to train primary, secondary and higher secondary level teachers in ICT through short training programme in the Upozila<sup>5</sup> ICT Training and Resource Centre for Education (UITRCE). With this aim a project is undertaken to establish UITRCE in 125 Upozilas with an estimated cost of USD 50 million mostly funded by the Korean Economic Development Cooperation Fund as a soft loan repayable in 40 years (BANBEIS, 2016).

### **Secondary English teachers' in-service training**

In-service teachers' professional development through training requires great attention, as the majority of secondary school teachers in Bangladesh start their teaching career without any teaching qualification or training.

EIA (2009 e) conducted a baseline survey to examine different types of training provided to the English teachers in Bangladesh, and they provided a comprehensive list of different training providers and ranges of courses that these providers offer for the English teachers of Bangladesh.

The present curriculum acknowledges the importance of qualified and trained teachers as central to bringing about the planned changes in education in Bangladesh. BANBEIS data showed that 68.8% of secondary teachers are trained in some kind of training including B.Ed, Dip. Ed or M.Ed (BANBEIS, 2015). However, the BANBEIS (2015) data also revealed

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<sup>5</sup> Upozila is a sub unit of a district in terms of geographical location and is used for administrative and other purposes

that 52% of secondary English teachers had one course of English in their undergraduate level degree, 23% of teachers are teaching English who did not study English at their undergraduate level and 4% of teachers only have a higher secondary qualification. These statistics show that a high percentage of English teachers started their teaching career without a sound educational background. Considering the importance of trained teachers many initiatives, both by the government and by different non-government organisations, have been taken (EIA, 2009f).

In service training for the secondary teachers in Bangladesh can be divided into two main categories: training programmes that are ongoing and financed by the Bangladesh government, and partnership-funded project-based short training courses. Teacher training colleges provide the main professional training for the secondary teachers who have not completed training before becoming a teacher. In addition there are some short training courses that are offered by different government institutions, such as those offered by the National Academy for Education Management (NAEM). The duration of these courses ranges from several days to one month (NAEM, n.d.). A one year Bachelor in Education (B.Ed) is offered by various government teacher training colleges, some non-government institutions and by the Bangladesh Open University. Project-based training courses are mainly financed by developed countries or by financial institutions like the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as a combination of grant and loan (Hamid, 2010).

Since the adoption of the CLT approach the Bangladesh government has initiated many externally funded projects to improve the learning and teaching of English. Training teachers is one of the most important aims of these projects. The notable government initiated teacher training programmes are the Teaching Quality Improvement (TQI) project which started with an aim to train 28,000 English teacher initially (EIA, 2009f), the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) (Farooqui, 2010), and the English in Action (EIA) project which is a jointly funded project by the Department of Foreign Investment of the UK (DFID) and the Bangladesh government. The National Curriculum and Textbook Boards (NCTB), and the National Academy of Educational Management (NAEM) arrange a range of training courses.

In addition to those, training courses for English teachers are offered by the Institutes of Education and Research (IER) of some universities, such as Dhaka University and Chittagong University, and various language institute of universities, such as the Institute of Modern Language of Dhaka University. The BRAC 'PACE' is the major non-government initiative that arranges training for secondary English teachers (Rahman, Kabir, & Afroze, 2006). Moreover, all teacher training colleges in Bangladesh arrange training courses for secondary school English teachers.

### **Project based teachers' training in Bangladesh**

Since the adoption of the CLT approach several projects have been undertaken that targeted English teachers' training. In the following section I will briefly describe the major projects that provide training for English teachers.

#### **ELTIP**

The English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) started in 1997, funded jointly by the British government and the Bangladesh government. The British Council and National Curriculum and Textbook Board NCTB jointly managed the programme. The aim of the introduction of ELTIP was to train teachers in communicative language teaching, enabling them to use the NCTB textbooks, *English for Today*, and enhancing their language skills and professional development (Farooqui, 2008). In the first phase 5,000 teachers were trained and four regional resource centres were established. 27 master trainers were trained in the United Kingdom at that time. When the funding for the project ended in 2002, the Bangladesh government decided to continue with the project and a second phase of the project run from 2002- 2005. A total of 17,328 teachers were trained at that time. This project was financed by the NCTB and BISEs. A third phase of the project was again funded by the NCTB and Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education BISEs and ran from 2005 to 2009. In the ELTIP project a total of 35,000 teachers were trained. However these projects encountered a range of problems, including funding, that are documented by various researchers (Hamid, 2010; Sarker, 2014). Other research (Ali & Walker, 2014; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Sargeant & Earling, 2011) also stated that ELTIP failed to make its intended impact.

## **TQI**

The Teaching Quality Improvement project (TQI) is jointly funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). One of the components of TQI project is to provide training to different subject teachers. A second phase of the project spans from 2012 to 2017. Under this project teacher training courses were arranged in different centres including teacher training colleges. For the English teachers a four-week continuing professional development course was arranged, focusing mainly on communicative language teaching. Teachers were trained how to teach in communicative language teaching and how to use the prescribed textbooks, *English for Today*, in the classroom.

## **EIA**

According to its mission statement, the aim of EIA is to enable “25 million Bangladeshi adults and school children to improve their English language skills that will help them access better economic and social opportunities” (EIA, 2010). The map of the areas where this project intends to work shows that they want to operate almost all over Bangladesh in 232 Upozilas with 51,000 teachers and 7 million students. This project is funded jointly by the DFID of the British government and the Bangladesh government. A nine-year project was implemented with the help of various partners such as BMB Mott MacDonald, BBC Media Action, The Open University, UK and two national NGOs. The project, as stated in the EIA website, aims to provide an innovative approach for adults to learn English and bringing changes in the classroom practices. EIA has developed materials following the content of the NCTB textbooks. These include interactive audio lessons to use in class, posters and video clips. There are teachers’ guides and audio and video resources for teachers’ professional development. All these materials are designed based on the existing NCTB textbooks (EIA, n.d. b) and these materials are designed so that they can be used as teaching aids to support the existing textbook and curriculum.

EIA developed listening materials which are now available from the Ministry of Education website. They train teacher to use these technologies in the classroom, aiming to develop teachers as facilitators of learning in the multimedia classroom. In the pilot phase they

provided an I-pod and a speaker loaded with teaching materials. But they found that many teachers had difficulty using and maintaining these devices. Then they provided a mobile phone and SD card loaded with digital content and a speaker that can be used in the classroom. In Bangladesh almost everyone is familiar with using mobile phones so this strategy was much easier for teachers to use.

### **Criticisms in published research of funded projects**

There are numerous criticisms of various aspects of the various externally funded projects, based on what seems to be waste of resources and lack of suitably qualified trainers. One criticised feature of the project based training courses is that every project seems want to start from scratch. EIA was started with similar goals to that of the previous ELTIP project and both projects were primarily funded by the same donor. However, instead of building on from the previous project, EIA started from the scratch. They started their projects with several baseline surveys. Hamid (2010) questioned the overlapping of these project based training and lack of co-ordination between these projects:

Moreover, each of the projects developed its own training infrastructure and resources which remain underused or unused at the end of the project. Thus, the cycle repeats itself as projects come and go in one of the poorest countries of the world (P. 304).

Further criticism is about the quality of trainers. In some instances the project, such as ELTIP phase I, starts with building training rooms in various locations and recruiting trainers for the duration of the projects. Once the project is over, the trainers become jobless. Sometimes teachers were employed to work as trainers along with their main job. Thus there is often a lack of motivation seen among trainers as in most of the cases they work as a guest trainers. Hunter (2009) commented that experienced teachers are not likely to leave their permanent fulltime jobs for working in short projects. He reported that fresh graduates are more likely to be the trainers for those projects. Sometimes experienced teachers work as trainers but they consider it as an additional duty to their permanent job. Consequently there may be doubts about their commitment to their guest



tutoring. Some other projects do not have their own resources, so they are implementing thorough various training providers like teacher training colleges. As a result it is often noticed that the regular programmes of those colleges is hampered. The effect of this overburdening of colleges and trainers is discussed further in Chapter Eight.

There is a common trend among these projects to finish with a declaration of the project's success in making significant change. EIA has a dedicated section in their website called *success stories* (EIA, n.d. b). EIA's research monitoring and evaluation section in their website has the statement: "EIA has achieved significant improvements in classroom practice and student learning outcomes." Once the lifespan of a project has ended the Bangladesh government often negotiates to renew the same project or to initiate a new project of similar nature. For example, ELTIP had several phases and towards the end Bangladesh government continued it with its own financing. When the TQI-I finished, TQI-II started. With the absence of any independent evaluation, there is little basis to prove or disprove how successful and effective these projects are. An experienced teacher trainer I interviewed, Noresh Voumik expressed concern about lavish spending of the various educational development projects' money for training:

We need to think how much of this project money we are putting in people's pocket legally in the name of honorarium; how much money we are wasting while implementing projects; how much we are sending abroad legally for foreign training. Can we reduce the waste of money in implementing these projects? We cannot be lavish in spending. We need these projects but we have to reduce the waste of money. We need to think further whether there are alternatives to these projects.

Not only the means of training but also the content of the training has been questioned. Hamid and Baldauf (2008) claim that since the introduction of communicative language teaching, the country is still struggling to see any apparent benefit. Various educators question the English attainment of students after the completion of higher secondary school. An Eminent Professor of Dhaka university questioned the appropriateness of CLT in Bangladesh, citing the example of students failing to get a pass mark in the undergraduate admission test (Habib & Chakraborty, 2014).

In Bangladesh there are commonly circulated reports that there are teachers who have been teaching English for a long time and had no chance to attend any training; on the other hand there are teachers who have attended the same training in different locations. My own field observations identified instances of lack of monitoring and lack of coordination in implementing project-based training. For example, I met some of my participants at one of the teachers' training colleges where they were attending a three weeks continuous professional development course on communicative language teaching under the TQI project, run by the Ministry of Education. Next month I went to interview some of the participants who were attending another Bangladesh government funded training programme on communicative language teaching. When I met the training group I was surprised to find that three students who I had interviewed in the previous month were again taking part in the training.

### **Perceived benefits of training**

Despite various criticisms, including mismanagement and lack of coordination, training courses were reported by many of my participants to have some positive impact. They spoke appreciatively of the opportunity to learn and try out new teaching strategies and of the benefits of developing collaborative relationships with colleagues.

For example, Osman Gani stated that he gained from attending a month long course on communicative language teaching:

I have learned about communicative language teaching in the training. For example, before attending the training I had no idea what was group work, pair work, mind mapping, pre-reading and post-reading activities and what is the importance of different materials in teaching. Since I attended the training I feel the urgency of learning. I feel I need to learn more to become a better teacher. The interactive activities that we learn in the training I sometimes do with my students and they really love it.

Nazrul Islam, a secondary teacher articulated the benefit of simulation classes in the training programme.

The most beneficial thing is the simulation classes where we get the chance to demonstrate in front of other teachers what we have learned and how to do different kinds of interactive activities; how to engage students in the lesson and how to use the textbook *English for Today*. Then we receive feedback from other teachers and the trainer. Not only that, the training gives me a chance to spend almost a month with other English teachers from different schools and from different districts. Even in our free time we exchange ideas and discuss about teaching. And more importantly it is an opportunity to speak English with other teachers that helps everyone to develop our English speaking skill.

Abul Kalam, a headmaster and English teacher, described his experience after attending two trainings, one is communicative language training and another one related to ICT.

I made changes in my teaching after attending in the training. Now I like to make my class friendly. After the trainings I feel that it is very essential for teachers to use interactive activities in the class. I have discussed with other teachers in my school including English teachers, and I have advised all the teachers to bring changes in their teaching. I make digital content to conduct classes with my students using computers and multimedia projectors and ask other teachers to do so. There are two other teachers in my school who teach English and I ask them to download all the listening materials from the NCTB website and use them with the students.

Saifuddin, an English teacher, also described his training positively:

It's the first time I have got a chance to attend in any training and it opens a lot of avenues for me. It offers something different from what I knew about teaching. The focus of the training was mainly on introducing and explaining communicative language teaching. What are the activities we can do with the students? How can we do those? How can we use the textbooks *English for Today* in the classroom? What are pre-reading and post-reading activities? How to organise group work and pair work and how to make the classroom interactive and student-centred? These were the focus of the training.

Abu Saleh, a teacher trainer, explained the purpose of the training and how trainers are chosen for the training:

There is a list of master trainers and only the listed master trainers can conduct the training sessions. In the training the main focus is on introducing teachers how to use the textbooks *English for Today* in the classroom. These books are written following the communicative language teaching methods. So training teachers to use these books is in turn training teachers in communicative language teaching. There are detailed explanations and varied kinds of activities in the textbooks. For example there are information gap activities, matching sentences, tables, puzzles, short answers, matching definition with words, true false and so on. There are suggested group works and pair works and different kinds of activities given so that teachers can give students practice in all four language skills. So the main aim of the training is to inform teachers about communicative language teaching and how they can use prescribed textbooks effectively in their teaching.

Although there are criticisms about the effectiveness of these short training courses and questions of whether the money is spent appropriately, the above comments by the participants in my study suggest that they were introduced to some new concepts and teaching strategies in the training. There are teachers in the secondary schools in Bangladesh who teach English but have very little knowledge about the communicative approach to language teaching and who are not familiar with other classroom activities than giving lectures (Chowdhury, 2010). For them these courses provided an opportunity to be introduced to communicative language teaching, which they may explore further. Participants were also introduced to using various kinds of teaching aids in the class. The training resource rooms were decorated with different kinds of posters, and sitting arrangements were laid out in such a way so that teachers could understand how to arrange the sitting arrangement in their classes if they want to conduct group works in the class and how to use various kinds of teaching aids in their teaching. The trainers focused on using the NCTB prescribed textbooks, which not only follow the principle of communicative language teaching but are in all the schools as they have been provided by the government.

The following collage of images shows moments from a training course I observed.



**Figure 6.1: Images from a CLT training course**

In the first picture a teacher is participating in a simulation class showing how he would use the text *English for Today*. In the second and third pictures, teachers are participating in group discussions. The fourth picture is of a training session where the trainer uses posters to illustrate how teachers can use them in their classrooms.

### **ICT training courses**

Many English teachers have received training on using ICT in their teaching under the various projects. The initial target for supporting schools with technological equipment is that in the first phase there would be at least one multimedia classroom in every school, in the second phase there would three to five multimedia classrooms in every school, and in the third phase computer and language labs would be established in every school (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2012).

With the help of the Asian Development Bank the government is implementing a policy called *Digital Bangladesh* which is monitored from the Prime Minister's Office through a programme called *Access to Information A2I*. The government of Bangladesh is gradually providing equipment like computer projectors and internet modems to schools, arranging training for the teachers in the teacher training colleges and at district level, and developing a digital textbook which any one can download free. One of the key aims is to train teachers so that they become proficient in using technology in the class and improve their pedagogical knowledge of teaching using technology. There are initiatives to develop master trainers for ICT. Under the TQI project ICT is one of the key areas where teachers are given training to use multimedia in their classroom. English teachers participated in this training and some of the English teachers I interviewed expressed their opinion on the positive aspects of using technology in the class. Aslam Uddin, a secondary school teacher, stated:

I learned making digital content when I was attending the two weeks ICT training at the teachers' training college at Pabna. Then I took part in a four days follow up training. The trainer explained what are the factors needed to take into consideration while making the digital content. I made digital content for the English class to show in a simulation class during the training and after that I made more by myself to use in my English class.

Jasim Uddin, a secondary English teacher, highlighted the benefit of using ICT in the classes at his school.

Since I have attended ICT training I try to take regular classes using multimedia equipment. I have learned how to download teaching materials from the NCTB website and from Shikkhokh Batayan<sup>6</sup>. From our school two of us have received this training. I find a big difference between taking class with multimedia and without it. To me students' attraction in the class is much higher in the multimedia class than the normal class. It makes my class systematic and I know the sequence of my class. The contents are pre-prepared so I don't have to write much on the

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<sup>6</sup> A web repository where teachers can share power point presentation and can discuss various educational issues with other members.

board and that saves me a lot of time in the class, especially when we have only 40 to 45 minutes for a class. When I teach a large class it is very effective. I can move around the class and ask questions from the front of the class and from the back as well. In our school almost all the classes have more than 100 students. The highest is Class Six with 134 students in a single class and there are 122 students in Class Nine. We cannot make sections because we do not have enough teachers. It is a non-government high school and our headmaster applied for the permission to recruit more teachers but still there is no response from the education board. In the city school if they have more students they can take part-time teachers and make sections in the class. Whereas in a village school like ours we cannot take any part-time teachers because we do not have sufficient funds for that.

Apurbo, an English teacher who is a model content developer of the Teachers' Portal, described his experience of using multimedia in the classrooms.-

If we use multimedia in the classroom it is easy to maintain the flow of the class. It is easy to maintain the large class. I can show photos and video easily. It raises curiosity among students. Conducting a question and answer session becomes easy. It makes classroom teaching more attractive and fun, and students learn in a joyful environment. I find it systematic and in the class I can give more tasks to my students. In my class I don't have to talk much; I give more chance to my students to talk in the class. I can download different materials from the internet and I upload my content in the teachers' portal. I received training and I help other teachers in my school to make digital content. I arrange training for the other teachers of my school who have not had a chance to attend training yet.

Shihab Hossain expressed a similar kind of opinion, highlighting the importance of building a network:

I teach in a girls' college. I have very good relationships with other teachers in my district. I have regular contact with the district education officer and the upazila education officer. I always help other teachers to make new content, to download new content and if anyone finds it difficult to make or download I provide them from my computer through a pen drive.

To download and upload content in the *Shikkokh Batayan* requires a user name and password. I help many teachers in my district to open a new account. I help other teachers to retrieve their password if they forget.

Upozila secondary education officers and Zilla education officers need to play a big role to implement this initiative. I know the Vanga upozila education officer who is an example. He took the initiative that every school in his area should use multimedia in teaching. He is a good user of different technologies. Whenever it is necessary he arranges trainings; sometimes he himself provides training, sometimes he asks other teachers including me to conduct training. I am a model content developer, and I am a master trainer as well. I try to help other teachers as much as I can. We have a very strong network. We regularly share our views through Facebook, email and other social media. We share our content by mail and ask suggestion for further development and improvement.

However, ICT capacity and resources are very limited considering the number of teachers in the secondary and higher secondary level in Bangladesh. To address this to some extent one of the initiatives from the government is to encourage schools to arrange *In-house training*- a training programme conducted in the school for those teachers who have not yet had a chance to attend any courses. This training is normally conducted by one of the teachers of the school who has a considerable knowledge of using computers and internet and who has received training on ICT.

One such teacher, Mosharrof, explained his experience:

I received ICT training and it opens a new door for me. I realise how important it is when I use in the class. Almost all students like this and the presence of multimedia in the class is amazing. Students are very attentive when I take class with multimedia. I then motivate other teachers in my school as well. In my school I help other teachers to make their own content and use it in their class. I help them to download nice content from the *Shikkokh Batayan*. In our school we have an ICT teacher. He helps other teachers to make digital content and then to use it in the class. There are teachers who in their whole life have never used a computer, projector or internet. Now they are learning these with joy and making beautiful content and are really interested to use multimedia in their teaching.



They are preparing and downloading eye catching digital content to teach in the class. Students love these and they learn in a happy environment. This is really inspiring.

That there are benefits of the in-service training courses is apparent from the teachers' comments. However, further critical evaluation is necessary to examine the extent to which these training courses are helping English teachers to teach effectively. Many of the teachers I interviewed were attending a training course for the first time so they may have been overwhelmed by learning about new possibilities and, like the students they describe, they too were thrilled with the novelty of using computers and multimedia projectors in the class.

### **Shortcomings**

In the following section I offer some of my observation and some teachers' comments that highlight problems in the short trainings courses.

One of the problems I observed arose because some course attendees lacked sufficient English language competency to participate in the course. Selina was one of the participating teachers who I was able to observe during a training session. Selina was attentive but very quiet in the training session. In that session there were teachers who had graduated from various public universities of Bangladesh and were teaching at prestigious schools in the city. Selina was a teacher of a village school, and she informed me that she was attending because someone from her school had to attend the government provided CPD training. She was not an English teacher but she taught English at her school. Throughout the training session she sat and listened without asking any question and without any kind of participation in the discussion. The trainer sometimes asked her opinion, but as the training was conducted in English it seemed to me she did not understand what the trainer was asking her. She would remain silent and the trainer seemed to realise that he could not spend too much time with her. He was unwilling to use participants' first language as one of the key messages of the training programme was to encourage participants to use English only in class. Selina was not

willing to demonstrate a simulation class. As attendance is the only requirement, there is no pass or fail in courses such as these. Therefore the question arises about how much benefit teachers like Selina get from attending this kind of training course. It seems impossible to expect different kinds of communicative activities in her English classes. So it would seem that there is need for very different courses for teachers who have not yet developed strong English language competency.

I learned from the participants that for many of them it was the first time they were attending any training course. Training courses are largely centralised in teacher training colleges and some resource centres. Teachers who come far from the city and need to find accommodation, struggle to attend. There is sometimes opportunity to stay in a college hostel, but there are few such facilities. One female participant described how hard it was for her to find accommodation to attend one month training in the city away from her village where she works:

It is very difficult to find temporary accommodation in the city in Bangladesh and especially for woman it is almost impossible to find a suitable accommodation. Besides for someone like me who is not familiar with the city it is very difficult to live in the crowded city life.

Another teacher, who asked for strict anonymity, reported his conversation with colleagues at his course and highlighted a lack of interest in changing practice:

One of the teachers said to me: 'I have no interest in the training. I have to come as it was mandatory and the school authority and administration asked me to go for the training. I am attending and getting training allowances. After teaching so many years now I have nothing to learn. I cannot change anything in my teaching'.

Jitendranath Roy, an experienced English teacher and an examiner of the S.S.C examination, also expressed his dissatisfaction with the existing training courses in some institutions:

Now our government wants to increase the percentage of passes. Students are not interested in the class, rather they are more interested in the coaching centre because coaching centres focus more on the examination. In the village students are not interested in speaking and listening; they are always afraid of the

examination and their all concentration is on passing the examination. The class time is very short, 40-45 minutes, and within this short time it is not possible to conduct the activities suggested in the training.

Jitendranath Roy then criticised the quality of basic pre-service training:

There are some institutions and some private universities that offer teacher training like the B.Ed and the quality of these training courses is very poor. In my school I have seen a teacher who has completed B.Ed from such an institution and it seems to me that he has learned nothing. He was hardly attending any classes - may be once in a week or even less - and after a while he got a degree. In my opinion the government should not recognise that kind of qualification.

Imran, a course participant and an English teacher in a very renowned school in the capital, highlighted the gap between course content and the needs of rural teachers:

Different schools have different rules, run by the different authorities. For example, in my school the first thing is discipline. The authorities tell us 'discipline is first - maintain discipline first then teach students'. In our school we have a good number of multimedia classrooms computer labs, and a language lab. So whatever we have learned in the training, we have the opportunities to apply in our teaching. It is essential to ensure different types of facilities in the rural schools. To bring changes we need to have a proper budget for the rural schools. We need to recruit qualified teachers. We need to arrange teachers' training and need to form a strong body who can monitor teaching in the rural areas by visiting frequently and ensuring that these teachers are implementing what they have learned in the classroom. They have been practising in the same way and they are used to their traditional teaching system. It is hard to break this shackle. I think our rural teachers cannot implement 10% of what they have learned in the training in their teaching.

Many participants identified the lack of resources with which to implement what had been learned in the course as a problem. They noted that the government has the aim to provide at least one laptop and one multimedia projector for every school. However, as several participants pointed out, in a school usually there are more than thousand

students and if every teacher wants to use a projector, it would be difficult to schedule one session in a week for each teacher with a particular class.

Moreover, I was reminded by participants that *load shedding*, cut-off of the electricity supply, is very common throughout Bangladesh and in the village areas the problem is especially severe. When there is a power cut during the class there is hardly any backup to continue the class. In many cases there is no electricity at all. A secondary English teacher, Abdul Hannan, who recently received training on ICT from the TQI project, described his experience:

I teach in a school which is in a *char* [an island in the middle of a river]. Far from the city, it is in a very remote area and in one of the disadvantaged areas of the district. There is no electricity in this area. Several governments over the last twenty years assured us that there will be electricity, but this is still a promise of which there is no sign of fulfilment. I have received training in using ICT and communicative language teaching at the teacher training college in Dhaka. I have made some digital content while I was taking training. I took help from other colleagues in the teacher training college and my instructor was very helpful. But since I came back from the training I tried if there is any scope to make digital content and use it in my school. Truly speaking there is no scope of doing what I have just learnt from the training. I have a feeling that if I could use multimedia in my class, there will be some changes.

We have a laptop in our school but there is no multimedia projector. There is an ICT teacher in our school who normally operates the laptop and uses it sometimes to teach the ICT class. I have learned to use the computer and I can do some work in Microsoft Word and in Microsoft PowerPoint. But the problem is we cannot use our laptop for a long time. Every time to charge the laptop we have to go to the nearby bazaar where there is a solar electricity plan. From there we charge our laptop and then we bring it to the school and work. Whenever the charge finishes we go to the bazaar again to recharge it. When we finish we normally keep it in the locker in the headmaster's room. The classroom condition is not conducive to use multimedia equipment. The benches, chairs and tables are very old and in very poor condition. I don't think we can use multimedia projector in this kind of

classroom even if we had electricity and a multimedia projector. Dust comes from everywhere: the computer and the multimedia projector may be damaged in a very short time if we use them regularly in this kind of classroom.

Lack of security for ICT equipment is one of the main concerns in many schools. One teacher mentioned that the laptop was stolen from the school. In most of the village area schools there is no boundary fence and sometimes there is no night security guard as well. Usually the computers and other valuable equipment are kept locked in a secure shelf in the headmaster's room. There are instances where teachers keep equipment at their home for security reasons.

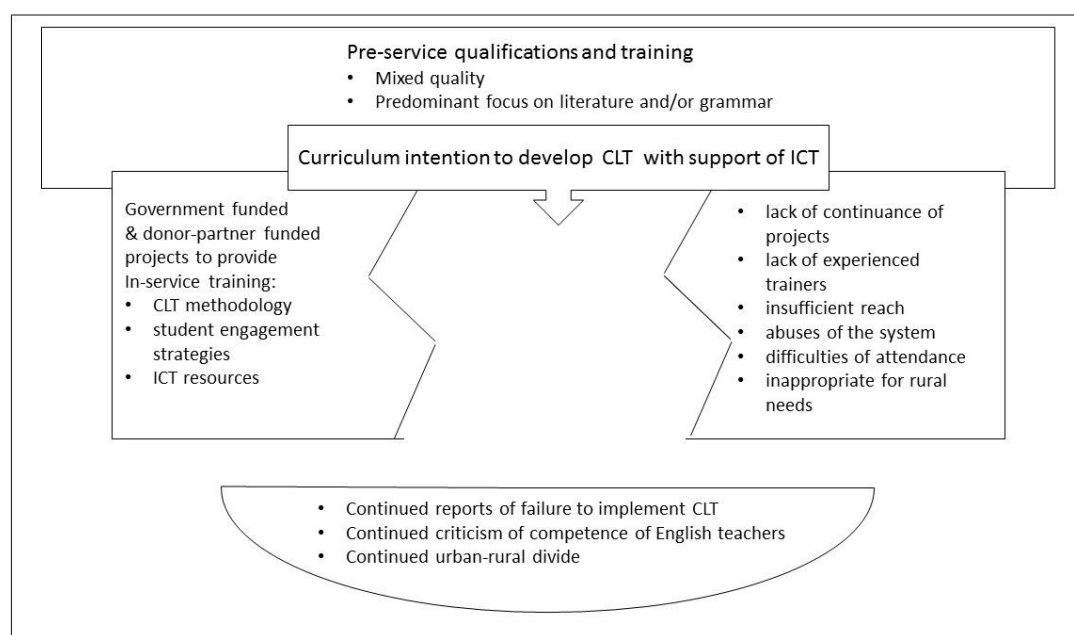
Another concern expressed by several teachers is the absence of technological support. If teachers need technical help to use equipment there is hardly any support available. That is one of the reasons why many teachers are afraid of using this equipment in their teaching. They have a feeling that if something goes wrong while they are using an item of equipment they may be responsible for the repair.

Participants also told me that the duration of class time is not suitable for use of multimedia. In most of the schools the multimedia is set in one room and when a teacher wants to use it students come to this room. If the class duration is 45 minutes, it takes first the few minutes for students to come to the new classroom, then further time to set up the equipment and get the class going. On the other hand to take the equipment to the new class every time and set it up would also take time. Participants also told me that although the government has created a pyramid system whereby one teacher is trained in ICT from each school and they are expected to arrange training in the school for the other teachers, some teachers do not want to disseminate what they have learnt in the training.

### **Emerging issues**

As is repeatedly reported in the literature (Hasan, 2013; Islam, 2015), English teachers come into school with inadequate skills in using English and in teaching it. It is claimed (Chowdhury & Le Ha., 2008; Hamid, 2010) that this is due to inadequate and perhaps inappropriate pre-service training. The government, with the aid of successive donor-partners has developed various programmes of in-service training to improve existing

teachers' pedagogical practice and to introduce them to ICT systems of support for their language teaching. Key features of these projects and their shortcomings are summarised in the figure below.



**Figure 6.2: Intentions and limitations of training courses**

As detailed in this chapter, short courses for improving English teachers' effectiveness have been developed, with course design coming from a succession of international institutions and funding being provided by international funding agencies as well as the government of Bangladesh. These courses predominantly focus on pedagogical approaches that would enable teachers to develop a more student-centred classroom environment and to use the government textbook, *English for Today*, in ways that are compatible with a communicative approach to language teaching. A further aim of many courses is to introduce teachers to the possibilities of using ICT resources to support their teaching of English.

Participants in this study, as well as published research findings, identified a number of shortcomings in the existing systems of short course professional training. Two overarching problems were the absence of sustainability in the funded projects and the lack of experienced and language proficient trainers. They also pointed out that, despite stated funding and policy aims, the projects have not yet had the capacity to involve a majority of English teachers. Participants reported their perception that there were

abuses of system in that many part-time trainers were insufficiently committed to the project and that some trainees came only because they were forced by their management committees or because they wanted to take the monetary gain of the training allowance. They further pointed out that because courses were centrally located, rural teachers, especially women, experienced difficulty in finding accommodation and leaving their families.

A very significant range of comments concerned the appropriateness of the training courses for the needs of rural teachers and their schools. Many rural teachers do not have enough English language competence to participate in, or even understand, the courses. Further, those who do understand are not provided with strategies to change the culture of their communities and schools, and do not have the resources to utilise the ICT training they have been given. Even city teachers reported that they found it hard to change their practice in view of the dominance of the examination system and the consequent reliance on guide books.

Despite successive training projects, popular opinion and published research (Hamid, 2008) suggest that a CLT approach has not been implemented to any significant extent in Bangladesh and that too many teachers of English lack basic language and pedagogical competencies. The participants' comments also point to an enduring urban-rural divide, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Research by Broad and Evan (2006) suggests that short-term project-based teacher training cannot bring the desired changes; findings from Bangladesh research (Hamid, 2010 ) support this view. The need is for sound pre-service programmes to ensure teachers are equipped with sound knowledge before they are appointed to schools. Lawlar (1990), criticising training programmes in England, asserted that

The emphasis in teaching must switch to the essential first requirement - that teachers have mastery of the subject to be taught (p. 7).

The survey results reported in Chapter Three also indicate that while the participating teachers largely understood and appreciated what they learned with their courses, they did not implement all their understandings into their practice.

While initiatives in the short training programmes are perceived to offer benefits to many of the participants I interviewed, the question arises if there is enough time and opportunity in courses for teachers who are not at all familiar with the communicative language teaching to learn different types of communicative classroom activities and use them successfully in their classes. They need to know how to refute the argument that there is not enough time in class to do group work or pair work. The prescribed textbooks, *English for Today*, are often disregarded by teachers because they focus on the high stake examinations; rather guidebooks and notebooks are turned to as they provide exercises similar to the examination format. As discussed in the Chapter Four examinations play a big role in determining teaching and learning in Bangladesh. So there is need for training that addresses how teachers can help students develop their communicative skills and at the same time prepare for the examination.

It might be asked whether better results could be obtained if there are opportunities for teachers in the field to collaborate with other teachers. For example, teachers and students from the rural schools could go to the prestigious city schools to see how the teachers in those schools teach. Similarly teachers of the city schools could come to the rural schools and teach there for a short period of time so that rural teachers can learn from them. One of the aims of the British Council's *Connecting Classrooms* project, in which some schools in Bangladesh are taking part, is to create collaboration between teachers and students from different countries and, following a similar model, collaboration between urban and rural schools might bring positive results in teachers' professional development.

Even more fundamentally, rather than relying on project-based and foreign consultant led short term training courses, Bangladesh needs to strengthen its own teacher training capacity through local institutions. Once funding has finished, projects end. Bangladesh needs to develop its own quality assured initial teacher training and its own system of continuing professional development. Long term policy, implementation, planning, and development of expert trainers are essential elements if Bangladesh is to see any real progression in education generally, and in English teaching in particular.

Admittedly it is essential to bring the teacher student ratio to an acceptable level and to reduce teaching loads so that teachers have some time to focus on professional



development. However, it is equally essential to ensure that teachers are enabled to become motivated to develop themselves professionally. At present there is no provision of monitoring and mentoring teachers' professional development and high stake examination results are the only yardstick to judge teachers, students and schools. Walter and Briggs (2012) analysed thirty five evidence-based professional development courses and concluded that effective professional development is classroom based, brings knowledge from outside the classroom and provides opportunities for teachers to work together with colleagues. They further concluded that effective professional development is continuous, long term and driven by supportive school leadership. Walter and Briggs findings can be considered as a guideline to develop professional development courses for Bangladeshi teachers. Moreover, forming strong school-based mentoring cells, like the project reported in Alam (2016), would perhaps also make it possible to achieve change.

Before teachers start teaching, they need to be given rigorous training in pedagogical as well as subject matter knowledge. Therefore, it is essential to ensure the quality of pre-service courses. At present there are 14 government teachers training colleges that offer courses, B.Ed and M.Ed programmes, and some of them offer B.A (Education) as well. There are 40 public universities and 90 private universities and hundreds of colleges across the country offering 3-year Bachelor or 4-year Bachelor with honours and Master degrees. A critical evaluation is required to examine the range of courses, and perhaps determine whether capacity could be developed in the teacher training colleges to train the entire teaching force.

However, not all stories of current training are stories of failure. I will conclude this chapter with an account of Emdad, an English teacher who, despite living and teaching in a very remote and rural area, has engaged himself by his own initiatives in different professional development activities and attended training and conferences both locally and internationally.

## Emdad's story



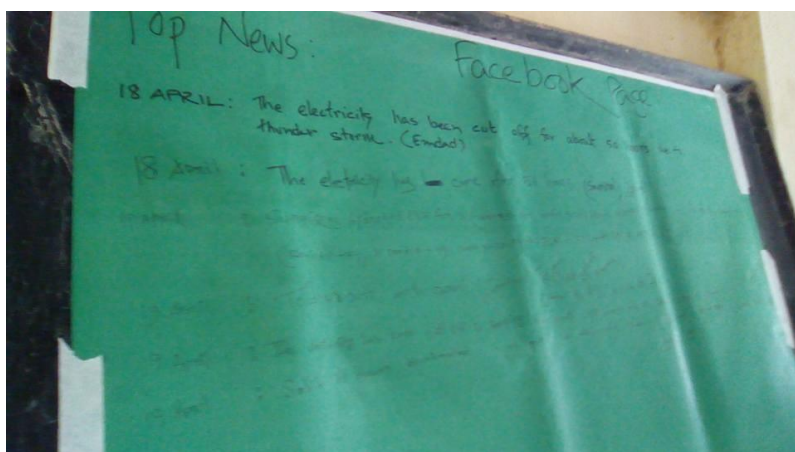
**Figure 6.3: Emdad with other teachers taking part in the Teaching Excellence Award**

Emdad, a middle aged man, works as an English teacher in a rural high school in the eastern part of Bangladesh. He studied in Dhaka city in his school and college life. He is an experienced English teacher who has been in the teaching profession for the last twelve years. Unlike many teachers who want to settle in the city, he rather enjoys staying at his village, and enjoys teaching at his village school. The school where he teaches, like many other village schools, has old buildings and plenty of open spaces. It is in a very remote area far from the capital; in fact it is near the eastern border of the country. Travelling from his village to the country's capital, which is the hub of almost every service that is available in Bangladesh, requires a good amount of time and effort. It takes about eight hours to reach to the capital. Despite living far from the capital Emdad regularly attends different national workshops, seminars and conferences related to English language teaching. He is a member of the Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (BELTA) and one of the regional coordinators of this association. Whenever BELTA plans to arrange any programmes, trainings, seminars or symposia he plays an active role, and especially when BELTA organises its regional seminars at the eastern part of the Bangladesh, he is one of the activists in arranging the seminar. Whenever there is any conference, symposium or training arranged in Bangladesh, if there is scope for him to participate, he participates. He has attended various training courses related to teaching including completion of a Bachelor of Education, and a month long teachers' training programme on communicative language teaching. He is an active member of

various teachers and professionals groups on Facebook where he interacts with others. He attended several free teachers' training courses for English teachers organised by the American embassy in Bangladesh, several national conferences and a professional development course for the teachers on *Tech solutions for the low-tech situations* organised by TESOL International in India. In 2015 he attended a training in the United States under the United States teacher training programme, *Teaching Excellence Award*. Under this project he participated in a six week long training in the US where he had the chance to visit American schools and attended a course at one of the United States universities. The training allowed him to experience American schools and to investigate what American teachers do with their students, and he shared in the American school what he does with his students in the class. There were many other teachers from different countries who attended that training. He described the benefits of attending the training:

It uplifts my belief and self-confidence. It gives me a chance to prepare myself better to serve the country as a teacher. I have made connections with over a hundred teachers from different countries and I keep regular contact with them and exchange ideas. It helps me to broaden my thinking.

When he had returned from the United States after the training he gave a presentation among other teachers in his school where he shared his memories and experiences of attending training in the United States. After receiving each training course he has started some interactive activities in his school and in his language club. For example, after the training in India he started what he calls non-digital-facebook activities. On the wall of the class he hangs a big poster where every student is welcome to write the top news of the day and then others can comment on the news. After a week there is a competition to select the best news of the week and the best news writer is rewarded with some gifts. He also arranges a group discussion on the top news of the week.



**Figure 6.4: Emdad's non-digital Facebook page**

He keeps regular professional contact with various English language teaching experts around the country. He has developed a personal relationship with many of them and his active involvement in arranging regional meetings and seminars gives him a chance to interact and learns from other teachers. He states:

I read different books and listen to lectures and always try to learn different interesting classroom activities. I feel that my class will be like where students will feel that if they miss a class they will miss a lot.

Along with his regular teaching duties, he has formed an English club where he arranges different kinds of interactive activities so that his students can develop their English skills. He has presented his English club activities in different seminars and that attracts other teachers' attention. After hearing of his innovative activities, some foreign teachers visited his language club's activities.

Emdad's story shows that rural teachers may also strive from personal motivation and be willing to learn new ideas and apply them to their teaching practice. However, despite Emdad's experience many rural teachers struggle with local poverty, isolation from the centre where curriculum is shaped, and lack of resources. The problems that confront rural teachers of English, and the strategies they and their communities take to deal with are addressed in the chapter that follows.

## **Chapter Seven: An urban-rural divide**

In the last three chapters I discussed three broad issues that make the effective teaching of English in Bangladesh complex. In this chapter I will present another complexity: the discrepancy between urban and rural conditions. In the survey reported in Chapter Three a number of the barriers stated by the participants related to disparities between urban and rural resources and opportunities. Research shows that urban-rural disparities are a major concern in various parts of the world, in a developed country like Australia (Alston & Kent, 2003) as well as in countries in South, South East Asia and Africa (Young, 2013).

This chapter starts with an introduction to the rural-urban divide in Bangladesh, and reviews related research. I then present several participants' narratives illustrating the gulf between urban, rural and slum people in Bangladesh in terms of educational opportunities, and particularly relating to English language teaching and learning. Finally I discuss issues that emerge from these narratives and from the broader context.

### **Concentration of educational resources in the cities**

In Bangladesh increasingly educational opportunities and achievement are becoming city based. Dhaka is the centre of administration and economic development. Some of the regional administrative offices and important business offices are situated in other divisional cities, but rural areas usually do not have any.

Like administration and other economic development, education is becoming urban-based. Rural schools are struggling with problems of lack of quality teachers, inadequate infrastructural development, lack of teaching resources, and lack of modern technologies, laboratory and library facilities, and absence of basic resources in the environment that would allow use of these technologies where they are available. Rural parents' limited capacities to pay for their children's education, absenteeism in the class, shortage of meritorious students in the rural schools are further factors that widen the gap between urban and rural students' educational opportunities and attainment in Bangladesh.

There is limited scope for having private tutors and fewer coaching centres in the rural areas, whereas in the city many coaching centres and private tutors are readily available and the parents of urban students can afford to send their children to coaching or to keep private tutors. Not only the students of prestigious urban schools of Dhaka and other metropolitan cities, but also students of less well-known school of the cities attend private tutors or coaching centres. On the other hand, in the rural areas private tutors or coaching centre are not so common, and in some cases those who can afford to go to the city attend private coaching centres in the city. Habib's (2011) research reported the inequalities between urban and rural disparities in Bangladesh. Habib stated that most of the top schools in terms of examination result in 2011 were from the metropolitan areas and only a few were from outside the cities. On the other hand most of the students who were unsuccessful in the examination were from rural areas.

A popular Bangla newspaper *The Daily Ittefaq* in its editorial (2016, Jun 22) stated that education in Bangladesh has become a commodity depending on people's buying capacity. The rich people of the city have the capacity to pay for good schools and afterschool tuition and the poor rural people do not have the capacity, and so have less educational opportunities. Moreover, kindergartens, prestigious schools and expensive English medium schools are only available in the city and the poor village people usually do not have access to these institutions.

In the same way the poor people of urban areas, despite living in the city, cannot afford to buy these forms of education. So education in Bangladesh is divided in terms of urban and rural and rich and poor, and the gulf between these urban and rural and rich and poor is widening day by day. An eminent economist of Bangladesh, Professor Abul Barakat, pointed out the disparities, saying that 75% of the total population of Bangladesh live in the rural areas of Bangladesh, but in the 2012-13 annual budget only 13% of the total budget were allocated for the rural areas and rest for the city areas (Bangla News, 2016, Jun 12). The disparity was also apparent in other sectors of the economy. For example, while the budget for water and sanitation for city people was BDT 900 per person, it was only BDT 11 for *char* (river islands) people and BDT 22 per person in the Hill Tracks (Prothom Alo, 2013). Alam (2016) also reported educational inequalities between urban and rural areas in Bangladesh. Citing the BANBEIS (2015) database he

stated that 77% of the secondary institutions in Bangladesh were in the rural areas and the rural institutions lagged behind the city institutions in terms of available resources and opportunities. Although the curriculum and the examination system are the same for the rural and urban schools, in most cases the only resources that are available in rural schools are teachers and the government provided textbooks.

Hasan (2013) studied rural schools' difficulties in implementing communicative language teaching. His study was based on two schools with one situated in a rural area and another one in a small town. He highlighted barriers that these schools were facing to implement communicative language teaching. These included lack of teachers, lack of English skills of teachers, students' lack of exposure to English, lack of resources, lack of competent teachers, insufficient hours to complete the curriculum, too many students in one class and teachers' misinterpreting the communicative language teaching approach.

Islam (2015) reported several schools in his study from the rural areas and from a densely populated poor area of a city. He described a rural school in his study where the resources were very scarce, stating:

There was no electricity in the school and there was no electricity driven modern technologies that might help in the educational process. The whole school premise comprised 1.5 acres of land and two mud built houses with a titanium shed (p.146).

He described the classroom in the following terms:

In one of the five classrooms, classes for Grade 10 were held. This classroom had a partition in the middle to accommodate another class of students on the other side. The places for doors and windows of these classrooms were wide open without any protection or shade. Therefore, the classrooms remained open 24 hours a day (p. 146).

Islam presented another school which is situated in a densely populated and relatively poor area of a city which did not have sufficient facilities for students and teachers. There was a severe shortage of teachers and one teacher sometimes needed to teach several subjects. He presented the classroom of this school as follows:

The classroom was tremendously small (measuring not more than 8-10 square meters). There were eight sets of small benches (high benches and seat benches) placed very much in a congested way of two rows. There were five sets of benches in one row and three sets of benches in another row. The space between these rows was very narrow where students could not easily move. These two sets of benches were allowing very little place for a chair in the front facing students, leaving a small open corner near the door in the front where the teacher stood. There was a small piece of blackboard in the middle of the front wall behind the chair. There was only one window on the side of the door facing a closed wall, thus not allowing sufficient sunlight or air inside the classroom (pp. 152-153).

Chowdhury (2010) reported that there were discrepancies between Bangladesh rural English teachers' understanding and interpretation of CLT and the National Curriculum and Textbooks Board's (NCTB) interpretation. As an example she stated that while the foundation of CLT is a focus on integrated skills, in her study she found that Bangladesh rural English teachers interpreted CLT as essential only for speaking.

Research suggests that there are a number of factors that affect students' educational attainment. These include demographic location, families' socio-economic status, parents' educational background, teachers' quality, facilities in the school and students' previous schooling. Sirin (2005) found a positive relationship between the family's socio-economic status and academic achievement. Grissmer (2003) reported a positive relationship between parents' educational background and children's educational achievement. Some researchers (Carr and Pawels, 2006; Gayton, 2010) found a positive relationship between a family's socio-economic background and language learning motivation. The PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) Report (2003) stated that in European school-aged children there is a significant relation between students' performance in a language proficiency test and their parents' higher educational qualification.

The quality of a school and facilities in the school have an impact on creating a favourable teaching and learning environment and on students' academic achievement. For example, Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008) reported that students' achievement and teachers' motivation to teach were higher when a school's physical environment, such as school



buildings, were in good condition. Dearden, Ferri, and Meghir (2002) concluded that attendance at a quality school had a significant impact on students' educational achievement. Similarly Deming, Hastings, Kane, and Staiger (2014), in their study in an American high school context, concluded that high school quality has an important influence on students' life chances and later success. However, other researchers, such as Taylor (1996), found only a weak relationship between the quality of the school and students' educational attainment.

Research indicates that qualified and well trained teachers have a big influence on students' academic achievement. In the U.S context Darling-Hammond (2000) reported students' achievement was higher when they were taught by better quality teachers. She asserted that the effect of well-prepared teachers on students' achievement was higher than other socio-economic factors such as poverty and students' background. The influence of excellent teachers in students' academic achievement is also strongly visible in the context of developing countries. In Bangladesh the curriculum acknowledges that experienced and qualified teachers are central to bringing desired changes in the education (National Curriculum, 2012).

In the next section I will present a number of narratives that illustrate the gulf between urban and rural areas in Bangladesh. First I will present narratives of two institutions - one from an impoverished rural area and another from an urban area. Then I will present several students' stories, two from rural areas, one from a slum and one from an urban context. Then I purposefully select three teachers' stories to highlight the disparities between urban, rural and slum schooling conditions.

### **Fulpur Alia Madrasha, a rural Alia Madrasha**

In a summer morning in July Mr Jamal was waiting for me at the Bissoroad Bazaar auto tempo stand<sup>7</sup>. I reached there by 9.00 am and then we took an auto rickshaw and went to a nearby station called Shonapur. From there we crossed a canal and then took a rickshaw. By rickshaw we travelled for about 45 minutes by a village road and reached

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<sup>7</sup> A small three wheeler auto rickshaw usually used in the rural areas as a public transport. These can run on the village road when necessary.

Fulpur Alia Madrasha, where Mr Jamal works as an English teacher. He does not travel every day from his home. On the weekend he usually comes to his home and during the weekdays he stays at the Madrasha.

The Madrasha is located in a nice natural environment. There is a small pond on one side with lots of green trees on its bank. On the other side there is a local bazaar.

I sat in the teachers' common room where the Principal comes to meet the teachers. Mr Jamal introduced me to the principal and then he took me for a tour of the Madrasha. The morning assembly started soon after. There was no fixed uniform for the students but students wore religious dress, boys with *panjabi*, *payjama*, and *tupi* and girls with *burkha* with *hijab* or *nikab*. However, overall the clothes of the students gave me an impression that they are not from well-off families. Some of the students wore shoes and some of them were bare footed.

The condition of the most of the classrooms was very poor. The main buildings seemed quite old and the walls looked like they have not been painted for a long time. The principal's comments also reflected the students' socio-economic status:

Most of the students in our school are from very poor families and many of them are not regular in the class. The attendance of students only increases a few days before the examination. When they come a few weeks before the examination, they are mainly concerned with the examination questions and what they need to learn so that they can at least pass in the examination. Anything that is not important for the examination they have no interest to study. In many cases we have to shorten the duration of our classes. If we continue classes for the full day after the lunch there is hardly any student in the class. Many of them go home and help their family in the afternoon. Girls usually help in the household work and some of the boys work. Some help their parent in agricultural work or in business. Therefore, instead of taking 45 minute class, sometimes we have to finish classes in 20 to 25 minutes so that there is class for every subject before lunch. In this way we try to finish by 1.30 pm instead of the mandated 4.30 pm finish.

In the next section I will briefly present a school and college which is situated in one of the developed areas of the country. This institution has many facilities that a rural school may not dream of.

### **Purbachal School and College**

Purbachal School and College is situated in the capital, in one of the expensive and modern residential areas in Bangladesh. This institution covers a large area and the college also has a big playground and modern buildings for the classrooms and other facilities.

Unlike many schools and college in Bangladesh where administration is governed and manipulated by local political power, in this school and college the members of the Board of Governors are different government personnel, like an Education Secretary, Chairman of the Education Board and other high officials in Bangladesh. This school and college is run in two shifts and education is offered in both Bangla and English medium following the national curriculum. Students can choose either medium of instruction.

One of the key features of this institution, as revealed from the discussion with some of the students and teachers, is the emphasis on discipline: strict rules and regulations are maintained. Students of this institution learn English as a great priority. This school and college has dedicated language labs equipped with computers and audio visual facilities. There are opportunities for students to watch English movies. Video and audio labs are provided to help students to improve their pronunciation. Students are encouraged to develop their spoken English, and activities utilising media in the language club are carried out under the supervision of a teacher.

Among other facilities this institution is a partner of the British Council's *Connecting Classrooms* project. Under this project students and teachers have visited the United Kingdom and teachers and students from the United Kingdom have in turn visited this school. Students take part in co-curricular activities regularly. There are different kinds of clubs and societies formed by the students, including a social awareness club. These clubs focus on sports like football, cricket, badminton, and different cultural programmes like debating both in Bangla and English, music, and gardening.

One of the specialities of this institution is its fully air-conditioned library with a wide range of books and magazines. Students have the chance to study daily newspapers and magazines and other books in a quiet and personal environment. The school and college authority maintains regular contact with the parents, and parents are informed regularly about the students' progress. In terms of results in the S.S.C and H.S.C examination this institution is one of the best in the country. It has held the top position for several years in terms of achieving GPA 5, and almost every year it is one of the top five institutions in the country.

The institution, however, charges a high monthly tuition fee which is, around one thousand to two thousand taka per month per student. Students also need to pay a one of session charge. In terms of the location of this institution it is in one of the expensive residential areas in Bangladesh. Comparatively richer people of the country live in this area. So students of this institute are also from well-off families. Those who come from different parts of the country to study in this school and college need to spend a good amount of money to live in these areas.

Teachers are offered an excellent remuneration and other facilities. This institution has more than two hundred faculty members and most of them are graduates of prestigious universities of the country. One of the participants of my study who works as an English teacher in this institution is a graduate of a prestigious public university in Bangladesh and along with his teaching he is also pursuing a part-time doctoral programme from the same university.

This account of two institutions shows the gulf between the affluent urban and poor rural institutions in Bangladesh. The two schools may be considered as ends of spectrum of difference. Not all urban schools, even excluding the slum areas, are so well resourced and not all rural communities are impoverished. However, as teachers' and students' accounts in preceding chapters have shown, significant differences between rural and urban schools do exist.

There are some differences in the curriculum that these two institutions follow. The Fulpur Alia Madrasha is a religious based institution and the Purbachal School and College is one of the mainstream school and colleges. Some of the subjects are same for both institutions and English is one of them. Students of both institutions are expected to

study under the same English Curriculum and they are expected to appear in the same national examinations, and teachers are expected to maintain the same standards in teaching, and in particular to follow the same government provided textbook. However, the opportunities in these two institutions are quite different. While one has well qualified teachers, modern classrooms, library facilities, the other seems to lack basic facilities. Thus the question needs to be asked: to what extent is the same curriculum and same textbook appropriate for these two institutions? The students' family backgrounds and previous schooling are quite different. While some of the students of Fulpur Alia Madrasa need to work to support their family, the parents of Purbachal School and College's students provide every support they need.

While in some cases students struggle to fulfil their basic needs, other students enjoy a wide range of facilities.

#### **Aklima, a female student from a rural area**

Aklima started her higher secondary study recently and when I talked to her she had been admitted to a girls college at her district town. She also got a place at the college hostel which is reasonably priced. Facilities were acceptable and she was happy thinking that she did not have to travel mile after mile to attend her classes, which she had done throughout her secondary school study.

Her father was the chairman of the Union Parishad and one of the rich people in the village. He wanted that his children should study. He decided to send his two sons to their maternal uncle's house so that they could attend school. However, the boys preferred to stay in the village and were involved in village politics. So they did not stay at their maternal uncle's house and they did not like to go to school. Aklima was the only one in the family who continued to study and who has successfully completed high school.

Aklima's village, Dhamora, is a remote village in the district, and boat is the only convenient transport in their area. When the water dries in the river and in the canal, walking is the only option. There is a road but it is submerged in every rainy season and when the rainy season is over, the road is not in any condition to use unless it is repaired. There is a primary school in her village but the nearby high school is six kilometres from

her village. Boys from her village take bicycles to go to the high school, but this is not a usual means of transport for a village girl. Girls usually take a rickshaw but still they need to walk about three kilometres through an open field, as in those three kilometres there is no road even for a rickshaw. During the monsoon, when water floods everywhere, boat is their only transport. At that time students from Alkima's village usually hire a boat together to go to school and after school they return together, again by boat. During rough weather and strong winds they do not go to the school because it is dangerous to travel by small boat in such weather. There are many other reasons why they sometimes cannot go to school. In winter mornings when there is dense fog their families do not feel it is safe for the girls to walk through the open field. When it rains it is difficult to walk and even in the harvesting season, they help their family and they do not go to school.

When Aklima was at school there was a private tutor at her village who used to come to her house to teach her. The private tutor taught her English, math and all other subjects. He used to work in an NGO in that area and along with his job he worked as a private tutor. There was no subject specific teacher around the village and to her English was a very challenging subject. The English teacher in the school mainly taught grammar but it was difficult for her to understand as she did not attend class regularly. So when she missed a class she lost the flow of the lessons. The school teacher also suggested important topics for the examination to memorise and he gave suggestions for various test items. She relied a lot on guidebooks to study English. She memorised composition, paragraphs and other necessary items from the guidebooks and tried to solve different grammatical exercises. In the guidebook there are always Bangla translations and she read these to understand what she was memorising.

Aklima's story is one of the thousands of stories of rural students who have to overcome numerous difficulties to attend schools. Despite coming from a well-off family, completing secondary school was a big challenge for her. She had very limited opportunities available from her school and from her private tutors. She did not have the opportunities to attend a well-known school, reputed coaching centre or to go good private tutors despite her father's ability to afford the cost.

However, there are many students who do not have the financial support available from their parents. Here I will present another student's story.

### **Mahin, a student from a slum area**

Mahin, a 14 years boy, lives in a rented slum house in a small bazaar. The bazaar, a small town, is one of the important business centres because of its easy access to road, river and rail. Mahin lost his father when he was four years old and his younger brother is one year junior to him. His father, Hannan, had a small takeaway restaurant from where he used to supply lunch to many shopkeepers and business owners in that bazaar. When Hannan passed away Mahin's mother with her two small sons was at a loss about how to survive. When Hannan was running his business he could afford to live in a good area but after his death his wife with two of their sons had no option but to rent a house in a slum. Mahin's mother was also searching a way that she could somehow earn money to survive and she took responsibility of her husband's business. Mahin described how he was engaged in the business:

I started a tiffin carrying career. I don't remember well how I started my tiffin carrying career as I was very young at that time. I did not go to school at that time and only went to the madrasa [where children attended for religious study usually in the morning]. I learnt all the things relating to my work very quickly and I knew our customers and soon I learnt to deliver food to different shops in the bazaar. I became familiar with most of the businesses and shops in the bazaar and different roads in the bazaar.

In the next year Mahin started going to the nearby primary school. Although schooling is free in Bangladesh, schools normally charge a fee for admission, examinations, sports and cultural functions. However his school did not charge Mahin any money and sometimes teachers and other business persons helped him with some money to buy books and other necessary things. His school at that time used to finish at 12.00 pm and soon after that he could distribute lunch to the customers. He also helped his mother in shopping and after the lunch period at around 3.00 pm he again collected the empty tiffin containers from the customers.

Somehow at this young age he learnt to balance work and study. His class performance was good in the primary school: in fact his roll place in every class was under ten. The roll place is based on the year end class examination results and the student who got the

highest mark in the examination becomes the first in the next class. Because of his academic performance his teachers liked him very much. In two years, when he moved to Class III, his school finished at 4.00 pm and he had to manage time to deliver food and sometimes would miss classes. His life went on this way for several years. Whereas his other classmates attended private tuition after the school, Mahin had to struggle with his study and work. Sometimes Mahin used to go to a teacher's home for private tuition, especially for Maths and English, but he could not attend regularly. However, none of his school teachers ever asked him for money for the private tuition and they encouraged him to come regularly.

When I talked to him during my data collection, he was a Class VIII student who had to take more responsibility for his business, and at the same time he was continuing his study. Recently he started going to a coaching centre in the morning to study maths, science and English. He explained:

I started going to the coaching centre because I find it difficult to understand Maths and English. I try to study at home by myself but it is difficult for me. Sometimes my friends help me and I borrow guidebooks from my friends to study.

Despite working and struggling to continue his study, Mahin is still continuing his study but for him the biggest challenge will be to continue his study in the future. If he can continue somehow, probably the next challenge for him will be to buy guidebooks, which all students usually buy and to attend in some after-hour coaching. Private tuition and guidebooks appear to be essential for most students.

However, another young boy who might have been a first year college boy by this time if he could have continue his study expressed his anger and blamed his school English teacher, saying that because of her he could not continue his study.

### **Robi, who dropped out of school**

Robi, a student from a relatively poor family dropped out of school three years ago and now works as a tractor driver. Rabi's parents, though not educated, wanted him to study and supported him in various ways. He was a regular student in the primary school and after finishing his primary schooling successfully, he started secondary school in his own



village. In the year end final examination in year six he successfully passed in all subjects except English. Yet he was promoted to Class VII. English as a subject was frightening for him. He memorised sentences but could not understand them or respond to what the teacher asked him in class. Often the English teacher gave him physical punishment, made derogatory comments, and sometimes Robi had to stand throughout the class. He told me that remaining standing in class, and especially in front of the female students, was very humiliating for him. Gradually he became reluctant to go to school and he did not appear in the year end final examination in Class VII. The next year his parents again admitted him in Class VII and he recalled that his experience in that year was not much different from the previous year. Gradually he lost interest in school and that was the end of his study. He stated that only twenty percent students of his classmates finished high school and the rest dropped out in various stages of their high school life.

While students like Aklima, Mahin and Robi struggle to continue their study, there are some students who are privileged to have every opportunity for success. Here I will present the story of such a privileged urban student.

### **Bishor, a city school boy**

Bishor is a Class XII student in one of the prestigious colleges of Dhaka city. He is the youngest in the family. He has two elder sisters and one elder brother. One of his elder sisters is a medical graduate and works as a doctor at a local hospital. His elder brother is a business graduate and works for a company. His other sister studies business at one of the public universities in Dhaka. His father is a retired college teacher and although his mother is a housewife, she is an educated woman.

Bishor started his school at a missionary primary school in a district town. As the school was run by the Christian missionaries, a special emphasis was put on English from the very beginning and unlike the national primary education in Bangladesh this missionary school had their own curriculum and teaching approach. His parents were always concerned about their youngest son's study and from Class I they tried to give him the best education possible. Apart from going to school he hardly went outside to play with other children; he would play at home. His parents were selective in buying toys for him.

Among his various toys he had toys like making English words with wooden letters, a video game where he had to find synonyms and antonyms for various English words, and a game for spelling a word after listening to an audio voice.

Aside from school, his parent spent time teaching him at home. There was no private tutor for him outside of his family to teach him at home, as other family members taught him. They used to live in a district town where Bishor's father worked, and when Bishor's father retired they moved to Dhaka, the capital city. Living in Dhaka is expensive but there is no better option if people want their children to study in reputed schools, colleges and universities. Bishor started his high school in a very famous high school not far from his house. He was one of the meritorious students in his class and in various examinations he stood first or second in the class. From his school life he was familiar with prestigious universities, engineering colleges and medical colleges in Bangladesh. He saw how his elder siblings studied and perhaps this was the norm in the family: to study hard and aim for the top university.

His parents were always aware of providing their children with an uninterrupted study environment. They each had their separate study rooms where their parents never allowed others to disturb their study. If there were guests in the house they would stay in the guest house and the parents would make sure that their children's study was not interrupted by any means. In Dhaka Bishor studied in the Bangla medium but he had a sound base of English from his childhood, because the missionary primary school where he had studied emphasised English. When he studied in the high school, apart from attending classes regularly, he studied English with a private tutor and in the evening a private tutor came to teach him at home to review all his subjects.

While affluent city students are privileged with comparatively better schooling, they also often have good family support as well. Their parents are conscious of the need for education and want to make sure that their children are succeeding.

In another interview, Muzammel a graduate student, who often works as a private tutor shared what an urban mother expected from him while he was teaching her child:

The mother of my students one day told me: "You are not giving him enough pressure, enough homework." I replied he had enough homework from school.

The mother told me again: “No you have to give him more homework and keep him in pressure. If you do not give him more homework he will not study.”

Muzammel’s account highlights the pressure parents themselves feel to offer the best for their children’s education. As Chapter Four has explained, the examination system is a powerful and apparently inescapable force in determining young people’s futures.

The four students’ stories I have presented here, show how students themselves as well as their parents understand the importance of examination success. The difference between them is the degree to which parents can resource the opportunities to create success. Wealth as well as location is a key factor. However, only those who are wealthy can exercise choice over location and most people in rural areas are living at a subsistence level. Teachers as well as students are impacted by the disparity between rural and urban resources.

Next I provide stories of four teachers. These narratives show the disparity among teachers in various secondary institutions. Although they all teach more or less at the same level, there are significant gaps between their qualifications, competency, and teaching skills.

### **Haridhon, a rural English teacher**

Mr. Haridhon Sarkar, a grey bearded man in his early fifties, has been working as a secondary English teacher for the last twenty-six years. Before joining Nibir High School where he has been teaching for the last twelve years, he worked in two other schools. Nibir High School is situated in a village. Although the communication system is good as it is beside one of the country’s main highways, it is situated in one of the underprivileged areas of the district. In fact it is so close to the highway that the continuous loud horns of the passing traffic causes disturbance in classes. There is no town near the school or any industry in the nearby area. Agriculture is the main economy, although many people live and work abroad. Students from several nearby villages come to this school. The school is east facing and in front of the school there is a small playing field for the school children and after that there are open spaces of green paddy fields for miles and there is hardly any houses in the east side of the school. The highway is on the west side of the school

and on the west side of the highway there are several villages from where the students mainly come.

I met Mr Sarkar when I visited his school for the first time. The headmaster introduced me to some teachers, of whom he was one of them. I talked to him about his teaching and other matters. My impression was that he was a very sociable man and willing to talk to new people. I asked whether he would allow me to observe his classes and whether he would agree to take part in interviews for my research. He agreed and we fixed a date to see his class.

When it was the time for the English class, Mr Sarkar took me into his class. Students stood when he entered. Mr Sarkar invited me to sit at the front of the class, but I asked if I could sit at the back and he agreed. He came to me and told me what he would teach in the class. However, he did not tell students anything about what he was going to teach. Instead, moving near the blackboard, he started writing on the board: 'PRESENT PERFECT CONTINUOUS TENSE' and underlined the words.

Around forty male students of class ten, dressed in white shirts and blue trousers or jeans, sat in rows and it was evident that the routine of the teacher writing on the board and the students copying was their everyday practice. He started his class writing some Bangla and English words to explain the present perfect continuous tense. Then he wrote some sentences showing the structure of the tense. After that he gave some Bangla sentences and asked students to translate them into English following the structure they had learnt. He translated the first sentence, as an example. Students then started asking some questions, and he would answer. Most of the time that raised their hands they would say, "Sorry, sir, I couldn't understand this". He came to me at the back of the class and told me that he needed to familiarise his students with the tense. I was attentive but I did not hear him speak any English except the sentences he had written in English on the blackboard. Most of time he was facing the blackboard.

He came to me again and emphasised the importance of grammar in learning English, saying that if the students learned grammar it would greatly benefit them in the examination. He then moved to his desk and one by one students started to come to his table with their *khata* to check that they translated correctly. As the time went on, the number of students by his desk was increasing. He then stopped checking students' script

and told the class that he was going to teach some more structures. By this time the bell rang, meaning time for this class was over.

I later reflected in my field journal that Mr Sarkar's confidence in inviting me into his class seemed to indicate that he felt secure about his teaching practice. I reflected that this seemed to align with the results of my earlier survey. The teachers who had participated in the survey knew the expectations in the curriculum about a communicative approach to teaching English, the use of English as a means of instruction and the importance of student-centred group work, but they also acknowledged that their practice was different because of the need they felt to prepare students for the examination. I also wondered to what extent Mr Sarkar's practice was influenced by his rural students' lack of basic English vocabulary and the daunting task of trying to develop communication in a language that was not heard outside the classroom.

### **Ismail Khan, a biology teacher**

Mr Ismail is a biology teacher at Modhupur College. He usually takes two classes every day in his college. The number of science stream students in this college is very low compared with humanities and business stream students. For all streams English is a compulsory subject. The English lecturer of this college does not live in this area and she comes from the nearby town, takes her classes and then goes back to her home. Mr Ismail, although a biology teacher, is well known in this area as a private tutor of English. Students always queue to enrol themselves in any of Mr Khan's private batches. I contacted him and asked him and his students for permission to talk to them and observe them. I went one day in the very early morning to the house he rented to teach students. It was 7.00 o'clock in the morning, a beautiful winter morning and the sun was just rising. He informed me that he teaches three batches in the morning.

The house where he taught was a relatively big house with no partitions inside so that it was one large room. On two sides the wall was made of bamboo and the two other sides were made of tin. There were benches and a table. The boys sat on one side of the room, the girls sat on the other and the teacher sat in the middle. When I entered the room the students greeted me nicely and Mr Khan introduced me to them with generosity and

spoke highly about me. I tried to be friendly with the students and asked them a few ice-breaking questions. I had the impression that the students were shy to talk. I asked several questions to the girls, most of them wearing hijab, but they seemed very shy to talk.

A student then suggested that if I wanted to ask them any questions they could write the answer as most of the students were very shy and reluctant to talk. However, they did ask me questions about myself and my study and about life abroad. Apart from two or three students who attempted to respond in English, other students did not speak a word in English. In the private classes Mr Islam mainly emphasised practising grammar items from various guidebooks and test papers. He had compiled some sheets of examination questions around which he centred his teaching. He had been privately teaching English for the last eighteen years and he explained how comfortable he felt teaching it:

I do not need any textbook, everything is in my memory. I only look at the textbooks, or any other books if there is any changes in the textbooks, syllabus or in the curriculum. Otherwise everything is in my mind.

Students brought books to the tuition but these were not the NCTB prescribed textbook but rather guidebooks from various publishers. One student explained:

We take sheets from the teacher. We solve them when we come to the tuition and at our home. If we fail to understand anything the teacher explains and he gives us all the correct answer. All the sheets are important for the examination. For example, for right forms of verb we have all the exercises in one sheet and they are from various guidebooks and we learn as much as we can. For other important examination questions also there are various sheets like this and we take practise and solve them.

By the numbers that attended his private classes, Mr Islam was clearly considered to be an effective teacher. He had no initial qualifications or training in English and he taught exclusively towards the examination. I reflected in my field journal that the teaching of English in this case was once again a matter of memorisation for examination requirements, and that neither school, students or private couch seemed to consider communicative skills as necessary,

However, not all the secondary and higher secondary rural teachers lack competency or willingness to teach English according to the expectations of the curriculum. While most of the highly qualified teachers usually like to live and work in the city, there are few teachers who despite having opportunities to live and teach in the city prefer to live and teach in the rural areas. In the last chapter I presented the story of one such rural English teacher, Emdad who, despite living in a village, makes every effort to develop himself professionally. I will present here the story of Anwar Hossain, who after living and teaching several years in the city decided to live and teach in a village.

### **Anwar Hossain, a rural English teacher**

Anwar Hossain is a teacher in his late thirties. He completed his undergraduate degree in English literature and also he has an MA in English from a public university in Bangladesh. He then completed a Bachelor in Education (B.Ed) from one of the teacher training colleges in Bangladesh. He has been teaching English in secondary schools in Bangladesh for the last seven years. Prior to start teaching in secondary schools in the outskirts of a small town, he taught in various English medium schools in the capital. He also has experience of teaching English at various tuition centres at the capital.

I had opportunity to observe several of his classes and later I interviewed him. I here describe one of his Class X English classes that I observed.

He wrote the objective of the lesson in the board and then told the students what they were going to learn in the lesson. At the beginning he asked some questions like ‘What do you do when you have free time?’ He then showed some pictures and asked students to look at those pictures. Students looked as he instructed and then asked some more questions. Students were very shy to talk, although one or two tried to say what they could see in the picture.

He then asked in Bangla the meaning of some English vocabulary and wrote the words on the board. The students already knew some of the meanings, some others he explained. He then asked students to read the text, and discuss it with each other. After the reading he asked what they understood. The lesson he was teaching was from the textbook *English for Today*. While students were reading the text he moved around the class. He

then asked questions, checking whether the students were able to understand. He frequently used the blackboard and various objects like books, his pen and other objects at hand to illustrate the use of various verb forms. There were some matching activities in the text that students then completed. Then, because another teacher was waiting in the door although it was not the time yet for the next class, he quickly summarised the lesson and gave students a written homework task.

In my observation I saw he had a very friendly and warm relationship with his students. He gave opportunities to his students to talk in class, and it seemed his students felt free to share their ideas. He asked them to speak in English although many students found it difficult. It seemed to me that there was more student talking time than teacher talking time.

Later when we talked he explained his study, teaching method, teaching philosophy and interest. He explained how he maintained a positive relationship with his students:

I talk to my students even outside my class time whenever I have the chance to talk. I talk to them about their study, and their social and family life. I discuss with them how they are doing in other subjects - things they like and things they are finding difficult. It helps me to build trust with my students. In my present school because of the large number of students it is difficult to stay in touch with every student and talk to them outside class time. But I am always open to whoever needs to talk. If I am free I try to talk to them.

He explained how he tried to keep a happy environment in his class:

I always aim to make my class enjoyable. I try to do it in various ways. Sometimes just after entering the class I ask students to stand up and remain standing and listen to me for one minute. Students normally stand in our country, but I do it just to make fun sometimes. I offer them a chance to smile, make small jokes, sometimes some sort of quick exercise. It helps to bring back attention in the class. Sometimes I start my class with a quick funny story, telling any current topic, any interesting story from the newspaper.

We arrange various kinds of co-curricular activities on different occasions. We enjoy it and also I have a plan to teach and arrange some activities that help



students to build their English skills. Recently we were in a study tour to Sylhet. There was lot of fun throughout the journey. We visited many interesting places. I brought the tour into my English classes and gave my students homework to write a composition based on the tour. Sometimes I asked students to share their photos as a basis for writing. Similarly, whenever there is any special programme, like celebrating any national day, I use those as a chance to use English in class. I am aware that I have to finish the syllabus, I am aware of what I have to do for the examination, but I always think about how can I do the same thing with joy. I tell my students that learning English is like learning to ride a bicycle. You will not only learn by reading books. Like with a bicycle, you will ride and fall and then you will try to ride again and fall and that is how you learn. Similarly you will learn English by practising, by making mistakes, trying again, and you will learn. The more you practise, the more you will learn.

I reflected in my field journal that Anwar Hossain had found ways to combine an experience based and communicative approach to English language teaching with the need for preparation for the examinations. It seemed to me that the pedagogical and language skills he had acquired during his career as well as his own teaching philosophy contributed to his ability to make language come alive in his classroom.

### **Kabir, a government college English teacher**

Kabir has a B.A (Hons) and an MA in English literature from a well-known university. After the completion of his study he worked as an English lecturer at a non-government college and a private university before successfully competing for the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination in the education cadre. He became a lecturer at a government college and since then he has worked at different government colleges in Bangladesh. However most of the time he worked in urban areas colleges. Apart from his academic qualifications he attended various training and professional development courses. He had the chance to complete a second M.A. in Applied Linguistics from a well-known western university. He has experience of working in the city as well as in rural area colleges in Bangladesh.

I started my discussion with him asking his experience of working in the rural areas. He shared his experiences of working in a rural college:

When I was promoted to assistant professor I was posted at a rural college, one and half hours journey from the city where I live. But I did not move to that place; rather I continued teaching from my home. It took me one and half hours to go and one and half hours to come back, but it would not be possible to live there as there were no facilities. After six months I was able to transfer again to the city where I live. If I live in that rural area I will not get any of the opportunities I can get in the city.

He highlighted several factors that contribute to disparity between urban and rural education, especially in terms of English teaching. Firstly, there is a gap in the use of English outside the classroom:

In the city students watch English TV channels and movies, use internet, browse different websites, and use various kinds of technology and keep contact through email. These activities give an opportunity to use English. Urban students have a role model in front of them, as many students from the colleges where they study get the chance to go to university and in the later life many of them reach to higher positions. In the city many students, while they are studying, take preparation for the IELTS examination with an intention to study abroad. In the rural areas, on the other hand, the picture is completely different. Even the good students from the village who have the ability come to the city colleges with a hope that they will get a better environment and good education.

He proceeded to describe how he feels about teaching in the rural areas and the dilemma he faced using English as a language of instruction in the class:

If I used English as a language of instruction in the English lesson, most of the students were not able to understand what I was saying. So I had to use Bangla. But this was not the case in the city where students' level of English is much better. Rural students often do not have any role model in front of them so that they can understand the effort required to move to higher position. These students often do not see anything beyond the examination and passing in the examination is their

only motto. Some notebooks and guidebooks traders take these opportunities and with the help of some teachers they compel students to study only their guidebooks. Surprisingly some teachers recommended those guidebooks and local book shops sell only those company's guidebooks and notebooks.

There are students who used to come to the college wearing inappropriate shoes or sometimes without shoes. One student came to the class wearing sandals, which is not usual and I thought that this student did not care about the classes. So I asked him, "Why don't you wear appropriate shoes?" I was really shocked to listen to his answer: "We are poor and this is the only pair of shoes I have and I cannot afford any more." These rural students sometimes came in the class after working in the field or in any other places in the morning. After that tiring work in the morning I felt that many of them were tired in the class and failed to concentrate.

Among other issues he pointed out that a secondary school teacher needs to take at least six or seven periods of forty five minutes every day. After so many classes it is quite natural that a teacher will be exhausted. Moreover because of the poor salary structure, teachers often engage themselves with coaching centres or teaching students at their home. He insisted that for a change to occur it is essential that secondary teachers' salary is revised. The above narratives show differences among teachers who teach more or less the same curriculum and whose students are expected to sit for same national examinations.

Haridhon's class is an illustrative example of what teaching looks like in many of the rural English classrooms in Bangladesh. There are teachers who are not confident in their own English skills, so they are happy to conduct classes in Bangla rather than English. They are comfortable at teaching grammar which they have been doing for many years. Usually they give rules first and then ask students to do some exercises. Haridhon was teaching grammar in isolation providing grammar rules first and then practising these rules in translation. He was not using any textbooks to teach his students. There were no communicative activities in the class and the classroom language was Bangla. Different language skills like speaking, listening, reading and writing were not taught in that particular class. Haridhan emphasised grammar exercises as grammar is an important part in the English examination at Secondary and Higher Secondary School examination.

Observation of his class and subsequent interviews suggested that he was not familiar with the communicative based English curriculum. He did not do any communicative activities with his students and hardly he used the NCTB prescribed textbook, *English for Today*. His lessons focused on various grammar, writing and reading exercises necessary for the examination. Subsequent interviews suggested that he did not teach speaking and listening skills in his English classes.

However in Haridhon's class there were basic facilities like seating arrangement for teachers and students and there was a blackboard to write on. Ismail's coaching centre, although a private tuition centre, did not have even these facilities. In Ismail's coaching centre there were not enough spaces and furniture for students to sit and not enough light in the room. There was no blackboard in the room. He himself shared a bench with his students. The importance of Ismail as an English teacher reveals the ineffective teaching in our rural institutions. Like in many other schools and colleges, students go for private tuition. However, in his case, in the absence of qualified English teachers, students opted to study English with a teacher who is primarily a biology teacher. Ismail preferred to coach English rather than biology as there was more earning potential. Private English teaching in Ismail's coaching centre was mainly teaching what will be in the examination and there seemed to be some fixed topics and rules that students needed to know. Even for a biology teacher, it did not require much preparation to teach.

The communicative based curriculum and the English textbooks *English for Today* were introduced to improve students' communicative ability. Teachers were encouraged to use learner-centred teaching and various communicative activities in the classroom. Like Haridhon, Ismail also did not use the prescribed textbooks *English for Today* in his teaching. In Ismail's coaching centre guidebooks are preferred as these guidebooks provide exam-like model questions and solutions. He compiled exercises from various guidebooks into one sheet and then provided these to students to learn from. These compilations were helpful for the examination and because of his exam-like teaching students wanted to study in his coaching centre. His teaching centred totally around exam questions. There were no communicative activities in his teaching, yet students queued to enrol in any of his batches.

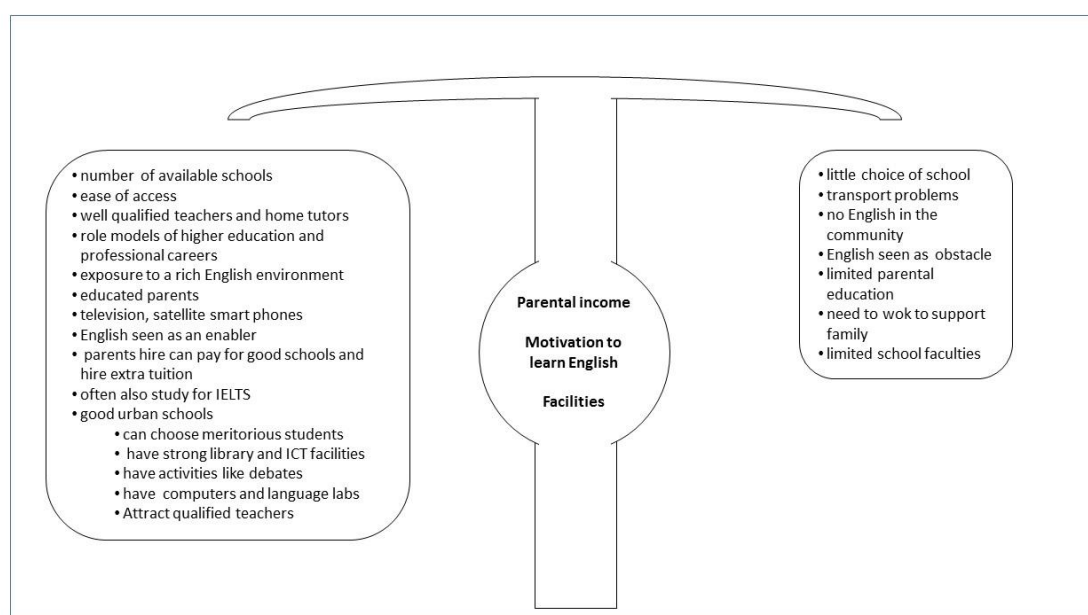
Anwar, on the other hand, was capable of conducting classes in English although he used a mix of Bangla and English for instruction. He used various objects in his teaching and tried to use communicative activities in his class. He had a good idea of the present curriculum and he attempted to implement it in his teaching. He focused on developing students' language skills but he was aware of the importance of good results in the examination. To him teaching is an honourable profession:

I consider teaching as a noble profession. I consider it as welfare. I have a job by which I can contribute positively to build my country. This is for me the best profession I can imagine. I get much pleasure, much interest that I believe I will not get in any other profession. I hope that in the future my situation, especially my economic situation, will improve. I will have a much better life.

Kabir had experience of studying abroad. Rural students and institutions lag behind urban ones in many aspects, and consequently teachers like Kabir has little interest to stay and teach in rural areas. If teachers like Kabir need to go into rural areas for any reason, they do not want to stay there and whenever there are opportunities most of the teachers like to live and teach in the city.

## Emerging issues

The following figure summarises some of the major disparities between urban and rural context, dependent to a large extent on the wealth of the families involved.



### **Figure 7.1: Urban-rural disparities**

A significant gulf exists among students from urban, rural and slum areas in terms of access to the school. In the city, in most cases, schools are nearby and means of transport are available. On the other hand in some rural areas going to the school is itself a major difficulty. Like Aklima, there are many students who have to struggle to go to school and their attendance in the school is interrupted for various reasons such as helping family during the harvesting season. On the other hand students in the richer urban areas generally do not face this kind of problem, rather the family often make sacrifices so that the children can attend a good school. For the slum dwellers the situation is even worse. Often slum children work along with their study.

English is not used in rural communities and is considered as a big barrier to rural and slum students' progress in education. Often English seems to be the most feared subject to study. Students like Mahin and Rabiul, despite showing promise, often stop school for various reasons. Even when they struggle to continue their study and achieve a pass mark, they cannot see any relevance for English in their future life. Moreover poverty, physical punishment in class, negligence by teachers, derogatory comments by the teachers, humiliation like remaining standing in the class in front of other students because of their poor performance, intensify students' decision to leave school. Some start working while they study and some leave their study to work. Often they start working in a low paid labourer job. Parents also have no other option as they need financial support from the children.

Disparity is also evident between urban and rural areas parents' and students' perceptions of the importance of learning English. While in most of the cases students from the rural areas are mainly concerned about passing in the examination, parents and students in the city, while expecting success in the examination, also see a step ahead. Many of the urban students aim to go to the prestigious universities and they are aware that competition to get in is very tough. Moreover urban students can get help from the students who are already studying in those universities whereas for a rural student that would be very difficult. Many urban students, while studying in school or college, start taking preparation for the English examinations like IELTS and TOFEL that will allow them to explore further studies abroad. Facilitating opportunities like this for a rural

student is not so easy. The slum students would rarely even consider such options. They struggle to continue their study, as in most cases they have to work to support their family.

Students in the city schools and colleges possess comparatively better language skills than their rural counterparts. From my observation and from comments from participants such as Kabir, good students from the rural areas seek opportunities to study in the city schools and colleges. Entry into the prestigious city schools is very competitive and these schools and colleges have the luxury to choose better students, whereas there are many rural schools and colleges that struggle to get sufficient students to run their academic activities. As a result good urban school students are competing with the other good students from the school and also they get help from their classmates. In the rural areas this competition is lacking as good students from rural areas usually leave to go to the nearby city school. So competitiveness among students is higher in the urban areas than in the rural areas.

Facilities in the urban schools are better than the rural schools. There are computers, multimedia projectors, nice classrooms, rich libraries, language labs and various other items of teaching equipment available in urban schools. These schools arrange various competitions like English debates, spelling contests, science competitions and creative writing. In rural schools, although the government has taken initiatives to provide one laptop and one multimedia projector for each school initially, there are many schools that do not receive these items. As discussed in the previous chapter, various contextual barriers make it difficult to use multimedia equipment in some rural schools. My observation of several rural schools in various parts of the country showed that there are very few facilities such as libraries, science labs, or audio-video materials available. It is important to note in this regard that there are some schools run by the NGOs for the slum children. As those are run often by various charities, providing basic literacy is the main goal. Thus, from my observation, having modern facilities is beyond imagination.

Compared with rural school students, urban school students have far more exposure to an English environment. While students from city schools and colleges are exposed to English language in various forms like using the internet, watching movies and English programmes, playing games on the computer and also participating in various activities

like debates and English language clubs, students in the rural areas do not have these opportunities. In the city there are many students who study in the English medium school under the British, American or Australian curriculum. There are also English versions of the national curriculum (Rahman, 2015) where students study the same content as Bangla medium students but in English. Moreover city schools provide opportunities for their students to engage in various co-curricular activities that help to develop English skills. These include arranging English debates, encouraging students to attend various national and international exhibitions such as British Council's Education Fair, international trade fairs, and spelling competitions. Rural schools seldom have these kinds of opportunities.

Compared to rural students' parents, urban students' parents are much better educated. It is usually the case that other family members are also educated. Like Bishor, described earlier in the chapter, students in the urban areas often get help from other members of the family. Sometimes it is the case that the elder siblings study in a reputed university. So it is not uncommon to have some conversation in English or to receive help in writing. In the city it is very unusual not to have television and satellite connection. So children often watch English news, movies, sports and various other programmes. It is very common to have smart phones and computers at home in city houses. In the rural areas these facilities are very limited. Moreover, rural parents are not as educated as the city dwellers. Thus students in the city are much more exposed to English outside the classroom than the rural students. For rural students the classroom is the only place where they get some exposure to English. As (Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013) suggested, exposure to English is a big factor in developing students' English skills, and rural and slum students have little such exposure.

Well qualified and trained teachers, in most cases, like to live and teach in the city, as teaching in the urban areas give them opportunities for a better life and better earnings. In village areas sometimes, in absence of an English teacher, teachers of other subjects teach English, as it provides earning potential through private tuition and coaching. Similarly it is quite easy to find students of prestigious universities and medical or engineering college students as a house tutor in the city areas. Graduates from various universities live in the city while they are searching for job or taking preparation for



various recruitment examinations and they also work as house tutors. The scenario is totally different in the rural areas where it is not so easy to find a good teacher for private tuition. Coaching centres are available in almost every part of the city. Even students from village schools attend these, if there is any available transport. Qualified and experienced teachers from urban areas find it difficult to live in the rural areas. They feel isolated and find it difficult to adapt to the rural environment. Moreover in the rural areas there is hardly any scope for teachers to develop professionally by interacting with other colleagues from the same field. In cases where a teacher needs to teach in a rural school, he or she usually does not live in that area. Rather they prefer to live in nearby town where there are more opportunities for them and where their children can go to a better school.

Compared with the city students, rural students also lack motivation for studying English. While English is regarded as a global language there are students in the rural areas who may never have visited their local town, let alone other countries. Moreover, since Bangladesh is a monolingual country they do not feel it necessary to learn to communicate in English. Thus they do not see any necessity of learning English beyond succeeding in the examination.

Parents' financial capacity is also another significant factor in terms of students' achievement (Hamid, 2009) and of English achievement in particular. Financially well-off parents can afford to send their children to schools and colleges that provide better facilities but charge a substantial amount of money as a monthly or one-off session fees. They also can afford to keep a house tutor or send their children to the coaching centre. On the other hand students from the less well-off families or from very poor families cannot afford to bear these expenses. They sometimes struggle to buy basics and sometimes the student has to work to support the family. There are many students like Mahin who have ability but cannot continue their study.

Thus in terms of opportunities, urban students are far better served than the rural students in Bangladesh. They have better support in school, better opportunities in school, their parents are more eager for their study and their parents are ready to make sacrifices for the better education of their children. The rural students, on the other hand, do not enjoy many of the facilities that city students do. However, the slum people are the

most underprivileged in terms of different facilities. Students from the slums struggle to continue their study. Slum children are more vulnerable and often the slum children have to work to support their family.

Because most of the civic facilities in Bangladesh are city based, urban schools are generally considered privileged. As discussed in the Chapter Four the examination result is the only yardstick used to judge students' achievement in Bangladesh. Urban students excel in the national examination and other examinations like university admission tests.

However, there are hundreds of examples in Bangladesh where students from the very remote and rural areas excel and reach in the higher position in their respective field. In his preface Hamid (2009) gives an account of one such student.

While there are opportunities in urban life, it is not without problems. Urban schools and colleges are very crowded and schools often lack enough open spaces. Especially in the megacities there are not many open spaces outside the schools either. Thus children usually spend time at home watching television and playing on computers or with video games. While these activities sometimes help students in their English language development, a serious question needs to be asked about whether it is conducive to students' intellectual development. In this aspect rural schools may have better opportunities for students to learn in a free and healthy environment where students can develop their intelligent thinking.

A big challenge is to ensure that qualified and experienced teachers are available and appointed to teach in the rural schools. This is a matter of both recruitment and retention. As described in the Chapter Five a rural English teacher took his students near to a beautiful river and then in the next class he encourages his students to write about it. This kind of practice if conducted meaningfully may help students to develop their language skills as well as thinking in a much healthier environment. It is also important to train teachers how to teach rural students. Thus research and training needs to focus what would be suitable approaches to teach rural students.

In terms of this research study, the disparity of resources, and motivation, for English language learning is significant. It clarifies some of the differences between teachers' reported understandings and practices found in my survey. It impacts considerably on

what might be considered effective English teaching: is it teaching that allows those who are financially able to utilise English as a stepping stone to a professional career or is teaching that allows students to pass an examination obstacle as easily as possible? It makes it necessary to carefully interrogate studies that report on national failure to teach communicative English in order to determine what kind of schools were in their sample. It opens questions about the usefulness of English being a compulsory subject in all schools.

## **Chapter Eight: International influences and English language teaching in Bangladesh**

The last four chapters presented the issues associated with English language teaching that emerged from inside the country. Based on materials from historical documents, published literature, and interviews in this chapter I will highlight aspects of the international impact on English language teaching in Bangladesh. International forces like western countries, social and cultural organisations such as the British Council, the American Centre, and financial organisations like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have implicitly or explicitly influenced English language teaching in Bangladesh. In this chapter I show that to some extent initiatives taken by these communities have benefited English language teaching in Bangladesh and because of their initiatives English language teaching has experienced a new impetus. However, these forces have also worked against Bangladeshi institutions becoming independent and developing their own initiatives.

The impact of colonialism is a significant factor in shaping teaching and learning in Bangladesh. In the next section I will highlight the impact of colonialism on English teaching and learning in Bangladesh and how it influenced the English language policy in independent Bangladesh. This section is based on historical documents and other published literature.

### **English in the subcontinent during the colonial period**

The root of the English teaching and learning can be traced to the colonial period. The British role in establishing the education policy of the subcontinent meant they designed the colonial education system following the British education system. English literature was studied in great detail. Even today studying English literature is considered as very prestigious in Bangladesh. Almost all the mainstream universities and hundreds of

National University affiliated colleges<sup>8</sup> in Bangladesh offer B.A.(hons) in English. These degrees usually have a large component of study of literature.

English was first introduced in India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the East India Company. English was then the language of administration, judiciary, military, education, trade and foreign communication. When the British government started ruling India in place of the East India Company, the language policy in India was then determined by the British government. It was Lord Macaulay's Minutes of 1835, which emphasised for the first time the importance of teaching English in the South Asian subcontinent. There were two main reasons he cited. First, he stated: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect". And the second reason stated in his Minutes was to establish the importance of European institutions and literature: "A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (University of British Columbia. n.d.).

The British reigning era ended with the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, but the English language retained its dominant position in South East Asia even after the independence of India and Pakistan. There were some protests against the dominance of English in postcolonial India, postcolonial Pakistan, Sri Lanka and in Bangladesh, but the language gained popularity because of its growing importance in print and electronic media and in international communication and trade (Crystal, 2004).

Bangladesh had a strong relationship with English language even before gaining independence from Pakistan in 1971. There were two parts in Pakistan: West Pakistan and East Pakistan. Bangla was the language of East Pakistan and Urdu was the official language of West Pakistan, although different languages, such as Pushto, Punjabi, Balochi, were also spoken in different provinces of West Pakistan. However, the number of people who could speak Urdu or any other of West Pakistan's languages in East Pakistan was very minimal; and similarly Bangla was not spoken in West Pakistan. Thus for communication and other matters English was the preferred language and English was

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<sup>8</sup> There are approximately sixteen hundred National University affiliated colleges.

considered as a link language between the two parts of Pakistan (Hamid, 2009). In East Pakistan, Bangla was the medium of education at primary and secondary levels, and English was studied as a subject from the third grade. There were also English-medium schools which followed British curricula. Generally only rich people could afford to send their children to those English-medium schools. The medium of higher education was English.

After independence in 1971, Bangla became the official language of Bangladesh, the language of administration, internal communication, education, and legal proceedings at the lower courts, and English become the second language (Imam, 2005). In 1987, the Bengali Language Introduction Law (Bangla Procholon Ain) was passed with an aim to extend the use of Bangla in different sectors. Bangla replaced English as the medium of instruction and communication in different sectors like administration, education, judiciary, and internal communication.

In the case of education, Bangla became the medium of instruction in the primary and secondary levels, and English was studied as one of the subjects. However, the transition from English to Bangla in higher education was not instant and smooth, as most of the texts in higher education were in English. It took a considerable amount of time and effort to translate them into Bangla, before introducing Bangla as a medium of instruction in higher education. In fact, to make Bangla a medium of instruction in the primary and secondary level, all English-medium schools were closed down (Banu & Sussex, 2001). To make Bangla the language in every sector the Bangladesh High Court issued a ruling asking why Bangla should not be mandatory in all sectors in Bangladesh including judiciary and offices following the Bangla Procholon Ain 1987 (Implementation of Bangla) (The Daily Star, 2014). The High Court also ordered the use of Bangla in all signs, advertising billboards and in the names of media.

### **Policy towards English in independent Bangladesh**

The policy towards English in Bangladesh, after independence in 1971, was not consistent. Dove (1983), while examining the educational policy from 1971 to 1981, argued that there were inconsistencies between the policy goal and implementation. She claimed that, although Bangla was adopted in policy and as the medium of instruction at the primary and secondary level, enough measures were not taken to implement such

policy. Hossain and Tollefson (2007), considering the inconsistent policy regarding the status of English, stated: “sometimes English has been encouraged, sometimes it has been limited and sometimes it has been forbidden.”

After independence the use of Bangla in all contexts was encouraged to uphold a nationalistic view and the law, Bangla Proclamation or use of Bangla in all contexts, was passed but not enough measures have been taken to implement Bangla in all contexts. For example, most of the textbooks for higher studies including scientific and medical books were in English. These books were not translated into Bangla nor were there substitute textbooks in Bangla. Ultimately there were no other alternatives to studying certain studies in English, and as a result having good English skills was, and still is, one of the prerequisites for higher studies. In the admission test for almost every university students have to prove their English skills and candidates need to obtain a high mark, specifically in English in order to be eligible for admission into higher studies.

There have been different opinions from various educational commissions about the stage of the education system at which English should be introduced as a subject. The National Education Commission, 1974, recommended introducing English (English as a subject) at Class VI. The 1988 Ministry of Education report recommended introducing English at Class III. Later Education Commission Reports, for instance, the 2002 Education Committee, recommended English to begin at Class III as a compulsory subject, while English could be introduced as an optional subject at Classes I and II. At present, English is being taught as a compulsory subject from Class I (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

The influence of colonialism is perceived to be strong even today. Studying English literature at the undergraduate level is still one of the very popular subjects. As stated earlier most of the mainstream universities and National University affiliated colleges in Bangladesh offer a four year Bachelor of Arts in English and one year Master of Arts in English. There are private schools that offer English-medium study and students of these schools take University of London ‘O level’ and ‘A level’ examinations. In the judiciary system, although the language of the lower court is Bangla, the language in the higher court is English. People have a positive attitude towards English and ability to speak in English is often considered as a matter of prestige. Often it is the rich people who can afford to send their children in private schools. Even in the villages, people have a belief

that English skill is necessary to get good jobs (Erling, Seargeant, Solly, Chowdhury & Rahman, 2012)

Although the colonial period is over and the British no longer rule the subcontinent, there are new forms of colonialism by which British or American institutions try to dominate the developing countries. In the next section I will discuss how organisations like the British Council, the American Centre and other financial institutions work as a neo-colonial agents, especially examining how they influence English teaching and learning in Bangladesh.

### **Globalisation and Neo- Colonial influences**

With the publication of the Robert Philipson's (1992) book *Linguistic Imperialism* the phenomena of neo-colonialism got much attention in English language teaching. Philipson argued that English teaching worldwide acts as a form of linguistic imperialism and major neo-colonial agencies, including the British Council, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, participate in spreading this imperialism. There were various myths, as he stated, that modern English Language Teaching (ELT) agents accepted as prevalent doctrine in the ELT profession worldwide. These included 'the monolingual fallacy' that affirmed that optimum results could be expected when English was taught monolingually. Another such myth was 'the native speaker fallacy' that advocated that native speakers were the best English teachers. 'The early start fallacy' referred to the notion that introduction of English in the early stages of education produced better results. Philipson identified further myths, 'the maximum exposure fallacy', which advocated that the more learners were exposed to English the better would be the result, and 'the subtractive fallacy' which referred to the notion that use of other languages in English teaching hampered English language learning. Philipson maintained that these myths upheld a new form of imperialism, that of control over language and the resources for teaching it. Philipson further argued that the neo-colonial agencies used the power of popular media to affirm the claim of the superiority of English in many respects, with many speakers in the world.

The power of English is reinforced because it is the key to enter in the global markets and such entry seems necessary to enable people to enjoy economic, political and technological benefits. The dominance of English started with colonisation and continues



in present days in various forms including political, economic and cultural dominance. Pennycook in this regards stated:

There are many ways in which the current spread of English, teaching methods, and textbooks can be seen as a recapitulation, if not an intensification, of (neo-) colonial relations (Pennycook, 2007 p.13).

Tollefson (2000) asserted that, while English creates opportunities for individuals and for nations, it also creates disparities:

Thus we are confronted with a paradox: at a time when English is widely seen as a key to the economic success of nations and the economic well-being of individuals, the spread of English also contributes to significant social, political, and economic inequalities (p. 8).

In many British colonised countries it is the case that English became the medium of study and the language of formal communication. For example, many African countries adopted English as the medium of studies. In some African countries, various donor agencies fund different educational projects with the condition that they will provide education in English or in any other European language rather than the country's native language, believing that in that case the people will have more opportunities to participate in the global economy and work force (MaJhanovic, 2014).

### ***Globalisations and its impact in English language teaching in Bangladesh***

Today English is undisputedly the global language and the lingua franca of the world. It is the bridging language among different cultures. More and more people in the world are learning English for various reasons. These reasons include communicating with others, working internationally, travelling, studying, listening to music and participating in many more hobbies and occupations. Crystal (2012) stated that English is dominant in various international domains including political, business, media, advertisement, broadcasting travel and science. It is the language that scientists use in most cases to write their reports for the wider international community. Research reports written in English are more easily accessible by the international community than research written in other languages.

The language of higher education in English speaking countries is English and many of the non-English speaking countries are gradually moving towards English medium study. For example, countries like Japan, Italy, Germany, Austria, and South Korea are now offering higher education in English.

The importance of English-medium study is growing day by day in Bangladesh. The number of private schools that provide English medium education is increasing and some of city school are offering schooling in English medium along with their Bangla medium stream (Rahman, 2015).

In the next section, I will present the stories of Rimi, a student of an English medium school, of Imu, a secondary student who recently completed his Secondary School Certificate examination, and of Tama, a recent graduate. Their stories illustrate the way proficiency in English language is regarded by families.

### ***The stories of Rimi, Imu and Tama***

Rimi a 14 year old girl, lives with her parents at the outskirts of the capital city. At the age of 14 she wears hijab. It is not a common scene in Bangladesh for a girl who studies in English medium to wear hijab at this age. Rimi is taking preparation for her upcoming 'O level' examination. There are secondary schools near her home, but she studies at an English-medium school in the city. It takes half an hour by minibuss to come to her school from her house.

Her parents are not so educated. Her father is not very rich although the family has land property. He is not involved in any regular business or job although he has some seasonal business. However, when it is about his daughter's education he is willing to spend the maximum amount he can afford. His two children study in an English medium school where the school tuition fees are comparatively very high. The family had the option to send their children to a Bangla medium secondary school which is free of cost; instead they choose to send their children to an English medium school. Rimi's mother is concerned and wishes that her daughter should lead a religious life and adhere to Bangladeshi culture. Yet she wants her daughter to study in an English medium school as she thinks studying and settling abroad are the only means to ensure a secure life for her daughter. She expressed her desire and plan for the future:

I want my children to study and settle abroad. If I wanted my children to study in Bangladesh we would not probably spend that much money to send them to an English medium school. To study abroad, English medium study is the best option for them. My children will have bright future if they study in an English medium school.

As Rimi is preparing to sit for the 'O level' examinations which are held by the British Council in Bangladesh, she is attending an English medium coaching centre and receiving private tuition. This coaching and the private tuition is more expensive than the Bangla medium coaching centre. Then registering for the examination also costs a significant amount of money. Her mother informed me that it cost five to six lakh taka (USD 7600) per year for her daughter. In the meantime, Rimi's parents have already started exploring her opportunities for higher studies abroad, although they are only concerned at this point about the cost of study and that the country will offer better opportunities to settle after her study. They also want their daughter to go to a country that is tolerant of an Islamic lifestyle.

When I talked to him, Imu, a fifteen year old boy, was waiting for his result after finishing his Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination. The result is usually published three months after the examination. Students are free from attending any classes at that time. Imu wanted to travel to some other cities in Bangladesh and to some of his relatives' houses before taking admission at the higher secondary level. His parents and other family members, on the other hand, wanted him to take admission into an English coaching centre. They thought that his English skill needed to be developed more for further study and for job opportunities. Imu consulted with a college English teacher and asked for advice regarding what he needs to study to improve his English. Even though Imu, at fifteen, is only at start of higher secondary, he is already anxious about how to develop his English skills enough to secure future career.

Tama, a science graduate, while exploring jobs opportunities in Bangladesh after her graduation was taking preparation for the IELTS examination as a first step to explore study opportunities abroad. She recognised there were other necessities for higher studies abroad, including getting admission, arranging necessary financial support and

obtaining a visa. However she prioritised sitting in the IELTS examination over any of these. She stated why she was prioritising the IELTS examination:

I have good subject matter knowledge but when I want to write a proposal or personal statement I cannot express what I want to say due to my poor language skills. So for me developing my language skills and sitting for the IELTS examination is the first priority.

Rimi's, Tama's and Imu's accounts are illustrative examples of many of the Bangladeshi students and parents' expectations for their children to study and settle abroad. Anthias (2008) studied student migration from Bangladesh to the United Kingdom and in her study she reported various motivations of Bangladeshi students to study abroad. These included Bangladeshi students' perceptions of the superiority of the United Kingdom's institutions. Participating students perceived that studying at a United Kingdom university would provide a better prospect of securing a job both abroad and in Bangladesh. Such study would provide opportunities to make contact with leading academics in students' respective fields and to meet students from various parts of the world. Among other benefits, as Antheis reported, studying abroad was associated with a family's social prestige. Ability to send children abroad is seen in Bangladesh as a sign of a family's social standing and a foreign qualification is considered as an enhancement of desirability as a marriage partner. Even low achieving students from Bangladesh see opportunity to study abroad as a route to work and settle in a developed country.

There is no denying that English competency is one of the key requirements for a developing country's people to be successful globally. Many countries put emphasis on English language teaching realising that it is a pre-requisite if they want to compete globally. In China, for example, acquiring English skills is seen as an opportunity for studying overseas, for gaining well-paid jobs in multinational companies, for better opportunities for trade and business, for settling abroad and for better communication systems (Bolton, 2003; Rai & Deng, 2016; Zhang, 2007). Park (2011) noted that in South Korea government and private companies put much emphasis on having good English skills. Obtaining a good score in a standardised English test has become one of the mandatory requirements to graduate from South Korean universities. The amount of time and money spent in learning English in South Korea is enormous and it often creates

financial and psychological burden for people, yet they are ready to invest their time and money with a belief that good English skills will open better job opportunities for them (Park, 2011). Along with other initiatives the South Korean government has taken initiatives to bring native speaking English teachers to South Korea to improve the teaching methodology and to improve the English skills of South Korean students (Jeon, 2009). The influence of globalisation and a belief in the importance of English is evident in Bangladesh government's initiatives as well.

### **Government policy**

In response to globalisation, the Bangladesh government has taken many initiatives. These initiatives include adopting a new education policy, revising curriculum, introducing ICT in Education, and developing its citizen's communicative ability in English so that they can compete globally. Some of these have been reported in previous chapters. The Bangladesh government intends to show the world that education in Bangladesh is progressing. There may be various reasons like gaining important recognition, increasing trade with other partners, building the country's image to the world. Often it is necessary to show improvement in education to secure further loans or aid from the developed world and agencies. In Bangladesh, in the absence of any other evaluation system, high stakes examination results are the criteria that are often used to measure success. Thus the results of the high stake examinations are often engineered to show government success and perhaps this is one of the reasons for the dramatic rise in the percentage of passes in the last few years. While students achieving GPA 5 in the different public examinations in Bangladesh have significantly increased, one of the public universities claims that they have had to relax their admission criteria as students failed to acquire a pass mark in the admission test. Some of the teachers participating in my study highlighted the issue that they had received instruction from the higher authority to be very lenient in examination script checking. "No matter what they write we have to give marks," said one of my participants who asked not to be identified. In a newspaper article regarding the H.S.C examination, Associate Professor Sheikh Hafizur Rahman highlighted the issue that teachers received written instruction saying that whatever students write in the exam script they should be awarded some marks. The markers were

to be very compassionate in awarding marks. The following quote is my translation from a Bangla newspaper article:

When I saw the percentage of passes is 76.5 and more than 50 thousand students got GPA 5, to know the real truth I talked to some teachers. They told me that after the higher secondary certificate examination when they receive exam scripts they receive a written instruction from the education boards. In that instruction they were instructed to be very benevolent in awarding marks. There was even an instruction that students should be awarded marks regardless of their correct or wrong answer. They should be awarded more marks than they deserve. The student who is not capable of getting a pass mark should also be awarded pass mark or more than that. (Rahman, 2012).

The following table shows the increase in the number of students getting GPA 5 in S.S.C and equivalent examinations since the 2001 introduction of a new grading system.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of students obtained GPA 5 in S.S.C &amp; equivalent examinations</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of students obtained GPA 5 in S.S.C &amp; equivalent examinations</i>
<b>2001</b>	76	2009	45934
<b>2002</b>	327	2010	62134
<b>2003</b>	1389	2011	62288
<b>2004</b>	8597	2012	85012
<b>2005</b>	15631	2013	91226
<b>2006</b>	24389	2014	142276
<b>2007</b>	25732	2015	111901
<b>2008</b>	41917	2016	109761

**Figure 8.1: Number of students who obtained GPA 5 in different years (source BANBEIS, n. d.)**

Because of the soaring number of students getting GPA 5 and the increased number of students passing in secondary education, students find it difficult to secure a place in the higher education as there is a limited number of places available in the public and private universities. At the same time the number of unemployed youth is also rising in Bangladesh. Thus policy on paper looks good but it is time to think seriously about how to implement the policy, including ways of developing the English language skills of this huge number of students.

Among government initiatives, the introduction of a communicative based English curriculum at secondary and higher secondary levels to improve its citizens' communicative ability is noteworthy, although, as discussed previously, there are debates about how effective this is in English language teaching (Hamid, 2008; Chowdhury, 2010). Several large scale projects, mainly funded by foreign loans and aid, have been undertaken to improve teaching and learning. Imam (2005), regarding the Bangladesh government's policy towards English, stated that 'being nationally competent in English is one necessary condition if Bangladesh is to move up the long curve of economic growth from its low starting point.' Pennycook's remark regarding how local people are responsible for the acceptance of English is significant:

What is immediately worth observing here is that it is not so much that British policy actively persuaded the expansion of English, but rather that the local elites demanded it because of its link to social and economic prestige (Pennycook, 1994. pp. 75 -76).

The growing demand for English medium schools in Bangladesh, despite the fact that they are very expensive, and the introduction of the English version of the national curriculum at the secondary and higher secondary level are also examples of the impact of globalisation. English medium schools are considered superior and prestigious in Bangladesh and because of the high cost associated with the school tuition fees and examination registration costs for examinations like 'O level' and 'A level', only rich parents can afford to send their children to those schools. These English medium schools mainly follow a British or American curriculum which has no alignment with the national curriculum and these kinds of schools are available mainly in the city, and the more elite schools are situated in the affluent parts of the city.

As discussed in Chapter Seven some of the city schools offer schooling in both Bangla and English medium in the same school. Although students in both streams study under the same national curriculum and sit for the same national examination, yet there is a divide between these two streams. Hassan (2011) reported the division, presenting the case of a school which offered both Bangla medium and English medium study where two streams of students have two different coloured school uniforms and the two sections do not often mix with each other. There are differences between school fees and other charges, where English medium students have to pay more than their Bangla medium counterparts. Moreover, she reported that there was a sense of superiority among the English medium students although both groups of students may be neighbours and lead almost identical cultural lifestyles. Hassan quoted one the English medium participant's comment to show the attitude of English medium students to their Bangla medium counterparts:

The Bangla medium girls...they are just not like us, they can't speak English well, so there is not much to talk about.

The medium of study in almost all the private universities is English. Enamul Haque, a participant in my study, who has the experience of teaching in both Bangla and English-medium schools compared Bangla and English medium schools, saying:

Though English medium students' English skills appear to be better than their Bangla medium counterparts, they lack studying Bangla literature, history and geography of Bangladesh and Bangladeshi culture.

However, he admits that there are some initiatives from the English medium schools to celebrate various Bangladeshi cultural programmes.

The Private University Act 1992, which allowed foreign bodies to establish universities, is another milestone in the history of English medium study in Bangladesh. Most of these universities teach all their courses in English. Again, because of the high cost associated with studying in the private universities in Bangladesh, only rich people can afford to send their children to those universities.

As discussed in Chapter Six, to keep pace with the modern world the Bangladesh government has taken initiative to introduce technology-based education. Initiatives have



been taken to train teachers including English teachers in using technology in their teaching and the multimedia teaching equipment are gradually being provided to schools.

### ***Development projects and neo- colonial agents***

English is now seen as a tool of economic development in Bangladesh, partly because of the importance perceived by the Bangladeshi people and partly because organisations like the British Council and the American Centre promote English. Although there are debates about the British Council's role in English teaching in Bangladesh, it apparently creates opportunities for Bangladeshi students and teachers to study abroad particularly in the United Kingdom. In Bangladesh the British Council offers various courses like English for university students, English for children and teenagers, English for the workplace, IELTS preparation courses and general English courses. The British Council is the centre for many British examinations. This includes the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), IELTS for visa and immigration, Cambridge English, International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGSE), A level and various professional and university examinations. The British Council introduces British universities to Bangladeshi students, and they offer help in their application process to those who want to apply to those universities.

The British Council offers consultancy for various English teaching related projects in Bangladesh and sometimes at a high price. For example, a National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) member who I interviewed in my study informed me that NCTB employed a British Council based advisor for a textbook writing project and that the advisor from British Council cost three to four times more than the local advisor. The difference could be explained in terms of the consultants' normal salaries. The important question, outside the scope of this thesis to answer, is whether the extra cost to Bangladesh provides real extra benefits.

As discussed in Chapter Six, British institutions have active involvement in most of the English language development projects in Bangladesh. These involvements include financing, implementing, providing training and working as advisors. One of the earliest ELT project in Bangladesh, ELTIP, was partly funded by the United Kingdom government,

and the British Council, along with other British institutions, was a key partner. Similarly the ongoing project English In Action (EIA) is partly funded by the Department of Foreign Investment and Development (DFID) of the British Government and several British organisations are involved in the implementation of this project. One of the major initiative of ELTIP was the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching in Bangladesh and English textbooks for the secondary and higher secondary level were written under the supervision of British experts while a group of writers were taking training in the United Kingdom. The EIA Project is also working to train teachers, develop teaching materials and upgrade the existing assessment system. Again, these tasks involve British consultants.

While developing countries do benefit from developed countries' and organisations' aid and loans, they are sometimes subject to exploitation as well. Babaci-Wilhite, Z. (2015) argued that organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed decisions on the poorer countries for educational reforms without considering the importance of local needs, local language and their way of learning.

The British Council also has an agenda beyond helping the developing countries to improve their English language teaching. Pennycook sees it as an institution that supports British commercial and political interests and describes the British Council's intention as follows:

We should welcome this as furthering English as the language of international commercial promotion, opening the world more readily to our salesman, there is a hidden sales element in every English teacher, book, magazine, film-strip and television program sent overseas. (Pennycook, 1994, pp. 10-11).

In Bangladesh the British Council was one of the main partners in the English Language Teaching Improvement Projects (ELTIP) that introduced Communicative Language Teaching, replacing the previous grammar-translation method in English teaching. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) stated: "Our students are very weak in English and as a result they can't apply English in their practical life successfully" (NCTB 2003). It was hoped that CLT would revitalise these 'weak' students' ability to learn English by "improving the standard of teaching and learning English at different levels of formal education" (NCTB 2003). CLT has been considered as the best method of teaching

English in various international contexts and many publishers claim that their ELT books are written based on the principles of CLT. In Bangladesh CLT was introduced expecting that it will bring positive changes in English teaching, and various projects, in their internally produced research, often report the success of CLT in Bangladesh, but questions remain about the extent to which it is bringing real positive changes. In previous chapters examples were presented showing the complexities in implementing CLT in Bangladesh. Here I will provide an illustrative example of teachers' concerns.

Biplob, a secondary English teacher in a school in the outskirts of the capital, commented that CLT is not appropriate in Bangladesh. From his experience he considered that in this method students are not encouraged to learn sentence structure or grammar and thus they fail to write correct sentence structures and to read English texts. He said:

Students are only interested to study model questions and answers necessary for their examination. So to keep my job secure I have to teach according to the students' demand. There are some magic paragraphs that some teachers provide to their students. They do not help a student to learn a language but they are enough to answer in the examination.

He showed me a model which could be used for paragraph writing for topics like *a day labourer, a rickshaw puller, a street hawker*. It contained sentences like

usually lives with his family in the slum. He gets up early in the morning and goes to work. When he gets more work he gets more money. Sometimes he and his family goes without food. Sorrows and sufferings are his constant companions. He does not know what is joy and happiness. He earns his living by working hard. Most of the time he is ill-paid and ill-treated in every sphere of his life. The services of .....plays an importance role in our national life. So we should think about his rights and show respect to them.

Biplob pointed out that students simply need to insert the topic that comes up in the examination. Biplob explained that if students memorised two or three model paragraphs like this it would be enough to pass the examination. So students are not willing to learn writing. Similarly he mentioned that the textbooks *English For Today* are considered as useless and students are not interested to study from these books as they are not

necessary for the S.S.C and H.S.C examinations. He informed me that he had learned how to use various students' centre activities and how to use multimedia equipment in teaching, but questioned the availability of time for teachers to prepare teaching materials for teaching when they needed to take six consecutive classes in a day. He told me that he was bound to engage himself in after hour teaching as the salary he received was only enough for the house rent of a modest house in his area.

An eminent professor of Dhaka University, in a seminar organised by the Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (BELTA) and sponsored by the British Council, criticised the current English teaching system in Bangladesh saying that because of it students' English skills were deteriorating alarmingly. He cited the statistics showing that only two students were able to get the required pass mark to be considered for undergraduate study in the Department of English and that this indicated students' real English attainment. He urged the inclusion of literature and translation in the secondary English curriculum (Personal communication).

### ***Loan and aid based development projects - are there benefits?***

Loan and aid agencies can be identified as key stakeholders in English language teaching in Bangladesh. The majority of the ELT initiatives in Bangladesh are fully or partially funded either as a loan or as aid by various organisations and countries (Hamid, 2010; Earling, Hamid & Seargeant, 2013). Often these projects are undertaken to modernise English language teaching. For example, the introduction of CLT and the writing of English textbooks for the secondary level following the communicative curriculum was initiated in the project called ELTIP (Farooqui, 2010). The current English In Action (EIA) started with an aim to develop communicative ability of twenty-five million people (EIA, 2010; Shohel & Banks, 2012). Other loan and aid funded projects like TQI and SESIP also offer teachers' training and learning support for secondary English teachers and learners.

It is often seen that consultants are employed from the first world countries and particularly from the country involved in financing the initiative. In the two major English teaching project ELTIP and EIA the consultants were mainly from the United Kingdom. Bangladesh experts have also been involved but to a limited capacity, and it is often the

case the key decision are made by the foreign consultant. There is an underlying presumption that Bangladesh lacks the expertise as well as funding to carry out the project. A question that arises is whether the employment of short term foreign experts can develop local Bangladeshi expertise unless there are clear plans for capacity development of local teams.

The end result of the current process is that the foreign consultants add to their project portfolios and their research outputs and the capacity of Bangladeshi institutions remains underdeveloped. Thus when the term of a loan is finished Bangladesh has to look for another loan or further aid to continue the initiative. As an example, when the ELTIP finished the EIA started with the same concept and both of them were primarily funded by the British government. When TQI-I finished Bangladesh had to seek another loan for the TQI- II project with a new international consultancy team. A teacher trainer who I interviewed in my study, Noresh Voumik, commented in this regard:

The loan providers often categorised consultants as national consultant and international consultant for various development projects in Bangladesh. If a consultant is employed from outside the country, then he or she gets a large amount of money and other facilities regardless of their expertise. On the other hand a national consultant does not get much money, even if he or she has much experience and expertise.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, there may be clear market force reasons for the difference in payments. What remains a challenge in Noresh Voumik's complaint is that the expertise of the foreign consultants is not always visible to the local teacher trainers and moreover is sometimes seriously questioned.

Ahsan Kabir, another participant in my study who works closely with the educational development projects in Bangladesh, commented that often loans are granted with a condition that training needs to be hosted in the intuitions of the country providing the loan. Again, it might be questioned whose interests are best served by the loan.

There is research that indicates that aid for improving education in developing countries often acts against country's development. Heyneman (2006) argued that educational aid for developing countries, instead of strengthening their local institutions limited their

capacity. Shamim (2011) found that project-based English language training schemes are not often sustainable. She cited the example of a donor funded English language teaching project in Pakistan and stated that although the success of the development project was reported in several studies, it was not sustained for long. The project built a centre at a university and once the project was over the centre became ineffective. She attributed two reasons for that ineffectiveness. First the project was undertaken outside the ministry's regular financial regulations and once the project funding was over there was no other means to continue. The second reason she offered was that since it was an external project it did not have adequate infrastructure. Heynman's claim and Shamim's observations are to some extent reflected in the donor or loan based educational development projects in Bangladesh. Donor or loan based educational projects sometimes build their own training teams and sometimes turn to various teacher training colleges. In my interviews with them several teacher trainers highlighted how project-based training projects hamper teacher training colleges' regular programmes. As some of these projects are run as part of the Bangladesh government's projects, teacher training colleges as government institutions are obliged to run the training sessions. They also provide opportunity for teacher trainers to earn extra money on top of their regular salary. So trainers in many cases are eager to teach in those courses. One experienced teacher trainer in my study, Shaila Akter, commented:

Many of the teachers in the teachers' training colleges somehow manage their regular teaching for B.ED, M.Ed or honours course and sometimes ask other colleagues to manage if needed. Then they involve themselves in those short training courses as from these trainings they get extra money depending on the number of classes they take. Some teachers think that their regular salary is their right and they will get it at the end of the month and they work hard for the short courses for extra money.

She added:

When June (the last month of financial year) approaches various organisations come to the teacher training colleges and request them to run their trainings as they want to spend their allocated budget by June. Teacher training colleges often run TQI, SEQAEP, LSB, Disaster Management's courses simultaneously.

Due to the shortage of teacher trainers sometimes it is seen that one teacher trainer is the master trainer of several courses. Still these projects want teacher training colleges to run their courses as ability to spend the allocated money is considered as the mark of a successful project and inability to spend money is considered as ineffective project management.

Teacher training colleges were established to provide degrees and professional development courses for teachers. It may be argued that these institutions should be the providers of pre-service and in-service teachers' education as well and that they can rightfully be partners to international projects. However, the current situation does not have enough infrastructural monitoring processes to assure quality. A Ministry of Education senior official who I interviewed in my study indicated that a new commission, the National Teachers Education Council (NTEC), has been formed to oversee the various teacher education providers and to ensure the quality of the various programmes. However this is still at the planning stage and a firm implementation strategy is yet to be developed.

Often externally funded projects arrange short training programmes in a developed country. In the following section I will present an account of a short training project that is financed by one of the foreign-loan-funded projects that engages with Bangladeshi secondary teachers' professional development. This account is based on my observations and interviews with the participants.

### **Short training abroad**

This account is of a training programme delivered in a well-known university of an English-speaking country. The participants were groups of teacher trainers and educational administrators from Bangladesh. Training periods for the various groups ranged from two weeks to eight weeks. The programme had been developed as the result of a call for tenders by international consultants for one of Bangladesh's teacher development projects. I talked with a number of Bangladeshi participants and with Bernard, the university's academic co-ordinator of the programme.

The participants highlighted several benefits of the training. They highlighted the opportunity to spend time in a first world country. They visited local schools and had opportunities to experience and discuss the classroom environment, school organisation and layout, teachers' and students' activities in the class and numbers of students that usually occur in a class. Participants' positive comments included the following:

We are used to traditional lecture-based teaching in our country. Here in the training we can see teachers are using many kinds of classroom activities. Teaching and learning is not confined only in the classroom. Students learn many things outside their classroom. Teaching and learning are not driven by examinations. Teachers are free to choose their own teaching materials.

Here teachers are not interested only to give information, but to also engage learners to inquire and learn. Teachers are committed and dedicated to their teaching profession.

It gives us an opportunity to see the classroom. Classrooms are well-equipped and organised. Teachers have freedom here over many things including choosing the teaching materials, devising assessment and experimenting with new ideas.

As indicated in their comments, the participants not only noted resource and organisational differences but also explored new ideas about the role and agency of teachers, about the learning process and about assessment.

Participants in some of the courses had opportunities to visit other agencies involved in education and discuss issues with them. In the concluding report one of the participating groups highlighted that they have better understanding of the teachers' education and registration process, teacher recruitment and professional development pathways, and the role of various agencies involved in education in the host country and based on their experiences there are opportunities to make recommendations for strategic changes in teacher education, and in recruitment, monitoring and empowerment processes.

While many of the participants readily discussed the benefits of training abroad, some highlighted what they saw as problems. Naresh Voumik, a teacher trainer, argued that it was not necessary to spend so much money for training abroad. He thought that the local talent and expertise were being underutilised:



We do not value our people. If someone comes from outside the country then he or she is regarded as an expert even if he or she does not have much expertise. In the same way, foreign universities and institutions and various consultancy firms are employed as consultants for different projects instead of local institutions.

Another participant, Ahsan Kabir commented on the selection procedures for the overseas training, saying:

Some people are selected for overseas training under various training projects because they have good connections with top management. There are people who should not be part of this kind of training team, but they are included on the request of high officials.

Evaluating the degree to which these comments were justified or not in terms of these particular courses is outside the scope of this project. What is significant here is that there were concerns about the appropriateness of selection of participants, about the cost effectiveness of going overseas for training, and about the readiness of Bangladeshi decision makers to take overseas advice and expertise at face value.

I later talked with Bernard, the academic co-ordinator of the programme. He acknowledged that he had also seriously wondered about the cost effectiveness of the training:

Initially I thought money could be better spend by providing the courses in Bangladesh and bringing us over if they wanted us. The costs are huge. It's not only the cost of the course but also the airfares and the pretty generous daily allowance participants get when they train overseas. But looking back at the courses now that they've finished I can see that coming overseas had some real value. The people had time and space to really think differently about education and their practice – they had a chance to be away from their habitual influences. They could experience the practical as well as the theoretical challenges of a different education environment, and they had time to explore what ideas they could adapt in their own ways. Moreover, we offered an academically organised course, we looked and critiqued at underlying ideas as well showing examples of classrooms and going to visit the Ministry. I don't think we could have achieved all those things if we had run the

course in Bangladesh. But in terms of cost? I think it will depend on what people take back and how they'll be enabled to use it back at home.

I asked Bernard if he thought there had been problems in making the courses effective. He identified several that he thought were significant:

I wish we could have had more collaborative planning with the consultants. I understand the nature of tendering, but after we had won the tender I wish we could have talked more. We signalled our willingness to adapt the course to the participants' needs, but we got no change for dialogue. And we were disappointed that the participants had not seen the agreed course objectives and content before they came. I thought there was a bit of a breakdown in planning between the consultants and the participants. When they arrived it took us time to all get onto the same page. The other thing that worried me was that in each group there were a few participants who didn't seem very interested. Most of them were fabulous: open-minded, full of inquiry and willing to try out new ideas. But one or two seemed disinterested. And they had very little English. I wondered why they had been picked.

To some extent Bernard's comments aligned with those of the course participants. There were things that both parties seemed to think had worked. There were concerns from Bernard and some of the participants about whether overseas training was the best value for money. There were also concerns, voiced differently, about the selection of participants. In addition Bernard voiced concerns about the lack of collaborative planning for the course. His comments about the lack of dialogue about the content of the course and about what he saw as the lack of communication between the consultant firm and the course participants highlight a significant issue in Bangladesh's current approaches to overseas training. There are a number of parties involved in an overseas training project: the funder, the Government, the consultants, international and sometimes local consultants, the provider and the course participants. The structures of politics, bidding processes and sectional interests make free and honest communication difficult. These difficulties seem to translate into barriers to effective planning and developing readily accessible and useful content.

Hunter (2009) described similar problems of communication in the delivery of a large ELT project in a developing country. He detailed conflicting expectations between stakeholders and reported that conflicts over expectations led to failure to complete tasks, eventual loss of trained trainers and failure to develop reflective evaluation. He argued that micropolitics had a big impact on the success or failure of projects.

There has been criticism in academic circles in Bangladesh about the cost effectiveness of loan-funded overseas training and about the processes of selecting participants. An eminent educationist, Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, expressed his concern regarding the inclusion of people who do not have necessary language skills in a group of Bangladeshi teachers and administrators sent to a programme in Australia. He questioned what they could learn from the training and how they could implement what the training offered after coming back to the country (Neowaj, 2016). In another newspaper article, Jamal Sayed questioned the validity of thirty Bangladeshi government high officials' participation in a two weeks training programme at a university in America. Because of the participants' rank they travelled in business class and they were given a generous daily allowances. He questioned how justifiable and worthy it was for a poor country's thirty officials to travelling to America for a two weeks. (Jamal, 2016).

It is often the case that universities in the developed countries run these short training courses as an additional course and sees it as an added income for the university. Whether that impacts on quality depends on who the university allocates to teaching the course and the degree to which the university teachers understand the context and needs of Bangladesh. I asked Bernard what he considered would make for good teaching in such a course. He said:

I think it's important we don't set out things to copy. We have to acknowledge Bangladesh has a different history and different immediate needs at this time. If people just visit our schools and report back about what we are doing, it's probably not going to be very useful. We have to create an environment where the group can argue out what ideas about learning and teaching are involved and whether those ideas are useful to Bangladesh and if they are what kinds of strategies would work in Bangladesh. I think it needs a double focus: exploring different ideas and facing local needs.

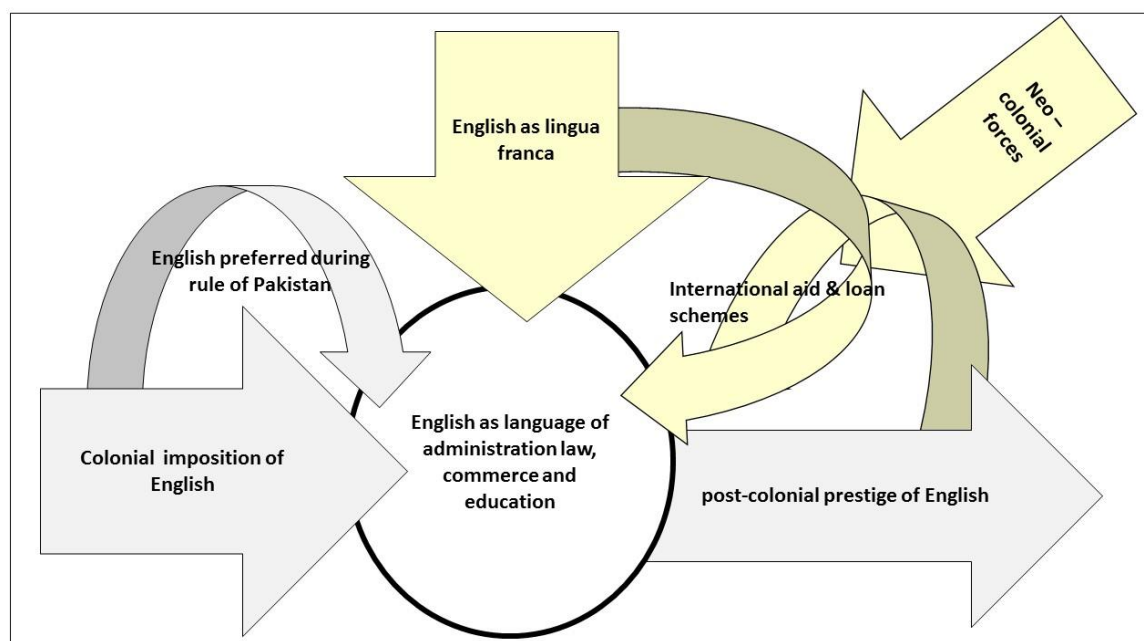
It would be interesting to investigate how other teachers in the universities that provide overseas training for Bangladesh see their role, whether they are familiar with the context of Bangladesh and whether they believe the structures and practices of their own countries would meet the needs of Bangladesh. It would also be interesting to investigate if they are respected academics of their university and how the university ranks these courses against their regular teaching programmes.

My own reflection on the courses I observed was that the participants became increasingly engaged in dialogue and debate and actively sought to align their inquiry with their understandings of the context of Bangladesh. I also noted in my field notes for each course that there were one or two participants who seemed less interested in the course content than the others. Some of these seemed to be very weak in English. Aligning my own observations with criticism in newspapers and in published research, I reflected that the usefulness of overseas training was reflected in quite few variables, some of which related to the provider (such as ability to engage participants in critical inquiry and knowledge of the Bangladesh context) and other related to the decision makers in Bangladesh (such as the quality of internal and external communication, the transparent selection of participants who could critique and utilise their new learning on their return and the development of strategic plans to allow them to do so). While a thorough examination and analysis of such variables is outside the scope of this thesis, it seems important to highlight that the arena training abroad is complex and may be empowering or exploitative, and that Bangladesh needs to develop more rigorous processes for evaluating international trainers and training.

### ***Emerging issues***

For Bangladeshi people to reap the benefit of trading with, studying in, working in, and sometimes settling in the western world, English language skills are considered as essential. English has become a global lingua franca and is internationally seen as a means of stepping out into the global world. It is also made attractive because it has been and still is the language of power, and so the use of English language may be seen as a component of forms of neo-colonialisms.

Not only does motivation for learning English come from the potential gains of interacting with globally powerful nations and organisations, but also the shape of English language teaching is shaped by powerful global agents. The figure below encapsulates key international influences on the motivation for the practices of English language learning and teaching.



**Figure 8.2: international influences on English language teaching and learning**

The British have had a significant impact on English education in Bangladesh which started from the colonial period, and in the current time institutions like the British Council are still key stakeholder in shaping the English teaching in Bangladesh.

In colonial times English was overtly the language of administration and influence. The style of education and the approach to learning English were also moulded by the colonisers to serve British interests and to reflect British values. By the time Britain departed from India and East Bengal was made Part of Pakistan, English language was so strongly embedded that it became the preferred cross-cultural language by Bengali during Pakistan rule.

Before the relatively recent introduction of communicative language teaching English textbooks at the secondary and higher secondary level in Bangladesh were mainly comprised famous English prose and poetry (Khan, 1999). At the undergraduate level studying English literature has been a top choice of those who want to study in humanities and arts streams. As a legacy of colonial times English has been the language of elite people, so people with social aspirations have a positive attitude towards English. Having good knowledge of English language and English literature is one of the prerequisite to be competed for the Bangladesh Civil Service examination (BCS). Candidates for all first class jobs of Bangladesh government are selected through the BCS examination. Thus to become a government doctor, engineer, teacher of any subject, accountant, police person or to join any other cadre having knowledge of English language and literature is a prerequisite. Usually the names of writers of important English literary pieces, famous quotations, dialogues, and knowledge of various literary genres are assessed through multiple choice questions (Bangladesh Public Service Commission, 2016). Moreover, the present scholars of English in Bangladesh mainly come from English literature backgrounds (Shamsuzzaman, 2015). So it is not surprising to see a love for English literature among English scholars in Bangladesh.

While the residues of colonisation still within Bangladeshi society, other, postcolonial, agents continue colonisation, although in informal ways. Organisations like the British Council, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and various donor and aid agencies have provided aid and loans with conditions like employing consultants of their choice, arranging training in the developed world, and providing education in English. Whereas other donors and loan providers such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank fund general educational development projects in Bangladesh, the United Kingdom's *Department for International Development (DFID)* funds only the English Language development projects, such as the *English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP)*, *English In Action (EIA)*. Thus British organisations such as the British Council, British Universities, and British experts have mainly been the consultant and key stakeholders in those projects. The British council in Bangladesh has several examination centres in various cities for IELTS and Cambridge examinations. These examinations enable private English medium schools in Bangladesh to offer schooling following a British or American curriculum rather than the

national one. Thus these agencies have been very influential in shaping English education and education generally.

In response to globalisation individuals, as well as the government of Bangladesh, have taken many initiatives to become proficient in English. These have led to a growing demand for English medium education and the establishment of an increasing number of English medium institutions, the establishment of English medium private universities, and the creation of an English version of the national curriculum. This has created some concern about how those who study in Bangla medium and in the village areas can compete in English examinations and in acquisition of the language. It seems necessary to critically examine whether rural Bangladeshi people, who are more than seventy percent of the country, are benefiting from the Bangladesh government's policy of prioritising global engagement.

Even if the government's emphasis on English language acquisition by all students is affirmed, it seems important to assess the usefulness in advancing the country's English teaching capacity of training programmes using the foreign loans or aid and involving foreign consultants. It is sometimes difficult for foreign consultants and experts to understand the culture, aspirations, constraints, competition and politics involved in English teaching and learning in Bangladesh. So it is appropriate to ask how long Bangladesh can rely on loan and aid based projects. To what extent is it possible to professionally develop a comparatively enormous number of teachers based on temporary projects funded by aid and loan?

Moreover, loans and aid do not come without conditional attachments. Developed countries often attempt to establish their dominance in the developing nations by offering aid and loans which often with many conditions, including the employment of consultants, the purchase of equipment or the negotiation of trade privileges or political alliances. Thus the loans may carry a twofold threat: that of being tied to consultants, programmes, resources or politics that do not serve the needs of Bangladesh and that of developing Bangladesh's own strengths and capacity through the dependence on temporary assistance.

There is severe shortage of teachers, and particularly English teachers, in schools and colleges. As discussed in Chapters Six and Seven there are many teachers who teach

English without any qualifications in English. On the other hand thousands of English graduates are eager to find any kind of job. Hunter (2009) observed that in the internationally funded short training programmes young untrained English graduates work as teacher trainers. If these graduates can, with supervision, work as a teacher's trainers, could they not be recruited and trained as teachers? Do teacher recruitment processes need to be reconsidered?

An initial exploration of this field suggests that the outcomes of foreign training need to be researched. To what extent are short foreign training courses beneficial? How many teachers, teacher trainers and administrators are getting these kinds of opportunities? How can beneficial elements be identified and incorporated into national training programmes?

Greenwood, Alam and Kabir (2014) advocate a concept of fair trade where both the host university and international students' country of origin educator benefit from internationalisation in education. They reported a project where fourteen Bangladeshi educators completed a two year Masters degree in a New Zealand university. They argued the importance of the needs of the home country being met as well as the attainment of scholarly knowledge. They attributed several factors including, quality teaching, hard work of the participants, careful selection of candidates with experience in teaching, relevant previous academic background, high motivation and reasonable English language skills for the academic success of that project. Then they argued for the collaborative dialogue that would enable the university to learn about the students' country's context, needs and aspirations, and enable the students to critically analyse the relevance of the academic knowledge they acquire in terms of their local context. The partnership that began with this project has continued beyond the project itself. Some of the students were successful in obtaining doctoral scholarships after the course and there has been further partnership in research and collaboration (Greenwood, Everatt, Kabir & Alam, 2013; Greenwood, Alam, Salahuddin & Rasheed, 2015).

In the first chapter of this thesis I talked about my research in terms of a boatman navigating and charting the shifting currents of the river. Perhaps internationalism could be figured in terms of the delta. It is the entryway to the sea, but it is also open to storms and damage. It too needs very watchful navigation.



## **Chapter Nine: Navigating the river**

The overarching contribution of this study is its presentation of a comprehensive picture of the complexities of the context in which English language is taught in Bangladesh. This chapter reviews key elements from the component chapters, discusses the significance of the composite picture, draws some alignments with other people's theories, suggests some implications for policy and practice, acknowledges my own learning through the process and returns to the metaphor of the river.

### **Looking back at the survey**

I designed the survey with an intention to find out teachers' beliefs about effective teaching and their reported practices. The intention was to determine some criteria that I could use as lenses to study effective teachers' practices.

The analysis of the survey did give some useful indicators of what teachers thought and of what they did in their classrooms and it prompted further investigation. However, as I analysed the data I became aware that teachers' statement about their reported practice sometimes needed to be taken with a grain of salt. In part this is because the questions did not ask for specific details. For example, when a teacher stated that he used various teaching aids, there was no way of knowing whether he referred to one or two posters in his classroom or to a more extensive and varied range of aids. I was also aware that because many of the survey participants were attending a professional development course in English language teaching their attitudes were possibly coloured by the content of the training. Moreover, it is possible that many of the others who agreed to participate in the survey were teachers who considered they understood the intentions of the curriculum. So the sample could not claim to be representative of English teachers throughout Bangladesh. Nevertheless the survey was useful in indicating how a substantial group of English teachers understood the curriculum, what they considered to be effective practice, and how they were willing to report their own practice. As such it provided an indication that there were some differences between what teachers

considered to be effective practice and what they actually did in their classrooms. This prompted me to further investigate actual practices and to explore reasons for the differences.

I had begun the survey with the intention of later identifying effective teachers who I could use as models to counterpoint the predominantly deficit orientation of what has been described in published research about English language teaching in Bangladesh. The survey did highlight some of the criteria of effective teaching that I might look for; it also provoked me to want to know more about actual practices. Moreover, talking to people, students and parents as well as teachers, as I moved around the country to administer the survey, created conversations about teaching and about learning that also prompted me to further investigate complexities involved in English language teaching.

However, before moving forward to review the issues I explored in my further investigation, it is worth reviewing what the survey did show about what the teachers who participated thought were the characteristics of an effective English teacher in Bangladesh.

The survey results suggested that in Bangladesh secondary school context, an effective English teacher needs to have good command over English language, should have relevant qualifications with reasonable teaching experiences and his or her students should do well in the examination.

An effective English teacher needs to have good understanding of the curriculum's goals and objectives. He or she should conduct classes in English and also encourage students to speak English in the class.

He or she should not confine teaching only to the preparation of students for the examination. Rather along with preparing students for the examination, emphasis needs to be given equally to developing students' language skills.

Following the National Curriculum and Textbooks Board (NCTB) textbooks *English for Today* to get together with preparing his or her own teaching materials were also attributed as qualities of an effective English teacher in the Bangladesh secondary school context.

He or she should have the ability to adopt different teaching methodologies in their teaching, to use technology in their teaching, and to arrange effective group work and pair work. An effective teacher should allow students to take part in discussions in the class to ensure that the students are engaged in the classroom activities.

The survey indicated that teachers were divided about the merits of teaching grammar teaching, and about when, and even if, to give feedback and to correct students' mistakes. However, there was strong agreement that a teacher needs to ensure that there is equal emphasis on all four skills of a language: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The survey also highlighted a number of barriers that teachers thought stood in the way of such teaching. These included: mismatch between examination and curriculum, unqualified teachers, lack of understanding and application of communicative language teaching, shortage of facilities particularly in rural schools, excessive teaching and administrative loads, lack of in-service and pre-service training opportunities, frequent changes in the curriculum and syllabus, students' poor family background and fear of English.

### **The issue of the examinations**

The teachers who participated in the survey identified the examination system as a barrier to implementation of the intentions of the curriculum and as a shaper of their actual practice. The stories I reported in Chapter Four affirmed the power of examination system in directing the teaching practices and also revealed the extent to which the examination system was upheld by the expectations of families and the wider community.

Teaching and learning in the classroom, in private tuitions and in coaching centres are very often driven and restricted by examination demands. Because of the importance attached to the examination results, maximum efforts are concentrated on obtaining good grades in the examination. A lack of alignment is evident between secondary English curriculum goals and objectives and the existing national examinations, and the drive to do well in the examinations appears to be stronger and overrule curriculum intentions. There is a hidden syllabus and it is driven by what is important in the examinations. English textbooks prescribed and provided by the NCTB for the secondary and higher

secondary level, which are written following the principles of communicative language teaching, are often ignored, as commercially produced guidebooks and notebooks are considered more useful for preparing for the national examinations.

There are social expectations, particularly expectations from parents, teachers and from schools to get good grades. Examination success is needed for entry into higher education and professional careers. Schools are ranked on their examination successes. Thus examinations exert enormous pressure on young learners, and the need to succeed in them can block students' independent and creative thinking, as they are often allowed very limited scope to think beyond the examination.

The present examination systems are seen to encourage rote learning and memorisation rather than developing students' language skills. Skills that are not part of the examination, such as speaking and listening, are not highly valued by students and teachers, and in classroom activities these skills are often neglected. Due to the importance attached to the examination results, in most of the cases students, teachers and parents are concerned only with whatever brings good results.

Parents' financial ability is a big factor in determining examination outcomes. Those whose parents can afford to send their children to coaching centres and afford to keep a private tutor are in a better position to get good grades.

Although there are praiseworthy initiatives to teach a rich range of language skills taken by teachers and some are reported in this thesis, they are not the norm. With the present national examination system it seems impractical to achieve curriculum goals and objectives. It seems falsely optimistic to hope for any qualitative changes in teaching and learning before the current national examination system is made more consistent with curriculum goals. I would argue that in the current context it is not valid to blame teachers for teaching to the examination. I would also argue that institutional and policy changes are needed to better support teachers to teach to the curriculum, to help students' learning of language rather than coaching them to jump the hurdles of examinations.

### **The call for communicative competencies**

A significant gap exists between the communicative competence required by students for higher studies, employment, overseas study, and settling abroad, and the range of skills and competencies taught in classrooms.

The Bangladesh government policy has committed to implementing communicative language teaching of English at the secondary and higher secondary level with the aim to develop learners' communicative ability so that they can use English effectively in their real life and can compete globally. Policy states the need for learners to acquire necessary language skills required also for higher studies inside the country, for working in various government and non-government organisations, and for effectively communicating with foreigners to run businesses when necessary.

However these are aspiration goals. Students, parents and teachers pay more attention to immediate goals which are to pass the national examinations with good grades as good examination results are the precondition to subsequent success. Although the secondary curriculum emphasises communicative use of English, the national examinations at secondary level only assess students' knowledge about reading, writing and grammar. There is no formal provision for assessing speaking and listening, and the intended communicative and interactive classroom activities that the English curriculum mandates appear to be impractical in helping students to be successful in examinations. Even in the examinations for competing for admission to universities and for recruitment to various jobs reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar and some knowledge of English literature seem essential, but there is little importance seems to be attached to listening and speaking.

Moreover, various factors, including shortage of language teaching resources, lack of teachers who are qualified and competent in English and are well-trained in pedagogy, and lack of opportunities to practice English inside and outside the classroom, operate against achieving curriculum intentions of developing schools graduates who can communicate fluently in English.

Despite scattered initiatives by individual teachers and short term training initiatives taken by government, the goal of developing learners' communicative abilities seems still out of reach. I would argue that there needs to be means to value students' communicative ability in the national examinations, university admission tests, and in various job recruitment examinations before expecting that students and teachers will pay attention to developing students' communicative abilities.

## **Training**

Another issue that is highlighted in this study is the inadequate provision of in-service and pre-service training for secondary English teachers in Bangladesh. The government teacher training colleges, Institutes of Education and Research (IER) of several public universities, the National Academy of Educational Management (NAEM), the Open University and some private teacher training institutes are the main providers of training for the secondary teachers. Also government has taken initiatives to supplement, and sometimes direct, their work by engaging various donor and aid based development projects to create plans for and develop teachers' professional skills.

Teacher professional development is a vital issue in the Bangladesh context as, up to the current time, someone can become a teacher at secondary level without any teaching related training or qualification. There are many teachers who are working as English teachers despite not having relevant qualification or training, and for them there are not many opportunities for training and professional development.

There have been and are successive donor-partner led in-service short training courses. To some extent participants of these short training courses reported that they have benefited from attending the training and they also acknowledged that they have tried to apply what they have learned in the training to their teaching. Despite individual stories of dedication and success, it still appears to be inadequate to develop such a huge teaching force professionally depending mainly on the short project-based training. A lack of coordination is reported among various projects as various consultants have taken different initiatives to train teachers, which has often resulted in both overlaps and shortages of training opportunities as well as in conflicts in policy.

There are teachers with very limited knowledge of using technology like computers, internet and multimedia projectors. For them a short training course in ICT is not sufficient to learn to use technology in their classroom successfully. There are also contradictions between the teaching approaches expected from training courses and existing classroom conditions. For example in a class of a hundred students teacher is expected to conduct group work or pair work in a 35 to 45 minute class.

Training in Bangladesh is mainly held in the city where for rural teachers and for female teachers it is often difficult to attend. Short overseas training courses for teachers, teacher trainers and administrators are arranged mainly under the umbrella of donor or loan project and very few people get a chance to attend those training courses.

In the secondary English curriculum a well-qualified and trained teaching force is considered central to bringing about the desired changes in English teaching. Bangladesh has so far opted for short project based training courses which the published literature has often identified as ineffective. Thus attention needs to be paid to how Bangladesh can develop substantive pre-service training and long term and continuous professional development provision for teachers, and to how these can be monitored for further support and evaluation of teachers.

### **Urban, rural and wealth based disparities in education**

This study also reports the disparity that exists in terms of access, available resources and opportunities in urban, rural and slum areas. Though some stories of success and innovation by rural teachers are reported in Chapter Seven, these are not common scenarios in rural and slum areas. Of all, slum dwellers have the least facilities. It is evident that the rural areas are lagging behind in terms of infrastructural facilities, available resources, and quality teachers.

In the rural and slum areas there are very little opportunities to use English in the community. So for these students the classroom is the only place where they get the opportunity to use English. Moreover, it is reported that rural schools often do not have teachers who have necessary skills to teach English following the communicative

language teaching. So for rural students it is apparent that to some extent poverty is a great barrier in terms of attainment in education.

Disparities also exist between urban and rural parents' expectations, willingness and ability to spend money for their children's education. Urban parents who are comparatively financially well off are ready to spend the necessary money to buy good schools and good tutors for their children.

Most of the urban schools are better equipped with adequate classrooms, computers, libraries, and other facilities, whereas most of the rural schools do not have these facilities. As reported in Chapter Seven qualified and competent teachers do not want to live and work in the rural areas as most of the social and business facilities in Bangladesh are city based. Moreover, there are plenty of coaching centres and private tutors available in the city, and in the rural areas they are very rare.

While urban students in many cases receive excellent family support and are provided with an environment that is conducive to their English attainment, rural students sometimes need to work to support their family financially. It is very common for slum children to work to support their family. Advanced and well-off rural families often send their children to the urban schools.

Moreover there are unforeseen circumstances that affect the rural people of Bangladesh quite often. When I was writing this chapter I read the news of a flood that has affected several northern districts of Bangladesh. In several districts green crops, mainly paddy fields, which was the only crops of those areas, have been submerged by an early flood. In one district it was estimated that about 160 thousand hectares of crops were submerged and destroyed. There were report in most of the daily newspapers (such as *The Daily Star*, 2017 Apr 14) about the suffering and that people in those areas have been selling their cattle as there was no food for those animals. People were leaving their village in search of some kind of job in the city. Villagers were in crying need for immediate help. While there were reports of people's immense sufferings and sorrows of varied kinds, the impact on the schools and on the education of the children of those areas was not reported. I find myself asking what will be the impact of these unexpected disasters. Will the students of these affected areas be able to continue their study and attend the same



national examinations as many other privileged city students? At the same time I am aware that such calamitous floods regularly impact on the education of rural children.

### **International influences**

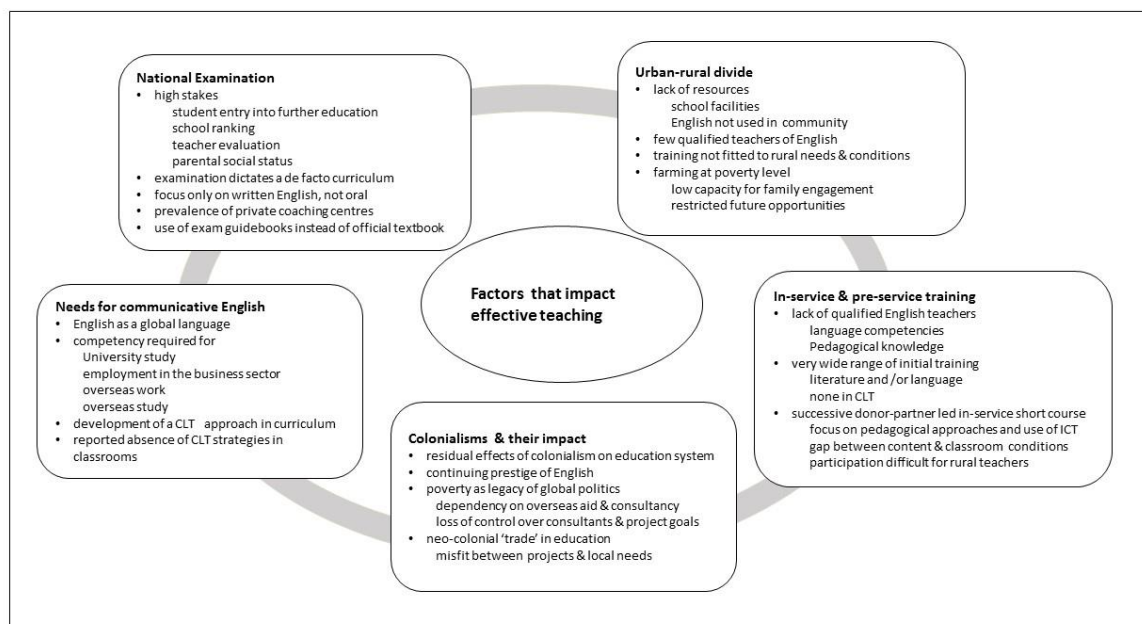
The impacts of colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalisation are other influential factor in shaping English language teaching in Bangladesh. The influence of English started with the British colonisation and as the British shaped the style of education and approaches to learning English in the sub-continent, British interests and British values were taken into account. While the history of colonisation is about exploitation, it brought some benefits. Because English was the language of the elite there were positive feelings towards English from the colonial time.

Like in many other colonised countries the residues of colonisation still exist in Bangladesh. In the present time developed countries and the neo-colonial agencies such as the British Council play a vital role in shaping English teaching. Bangladesh relies on these countries and agencies for various aids and loan. These often come with conditions, such as employing chosen consultants, arranging training in institutions in the fund providers' countries and buying necessary equipment from the loan providing country's organisations.

The majority of the English language development projects have been loan or aid funded. It is undeniable that these have made contributions in to English teaching in Bangladesh. Under these projects some teachers, teacher trainers and educational administrators have been given the opportunity to attend training abroad. This has created opportunities for them to see other contexts, schools and education system while they were outside their usual circles. However it is equally important to consider the danger of the control that accompanies this foreign aid. These are neo-colonial agencies and there is tendency for developed countries to exploit the poverty of the developing nation and sometimes to impose their decisions ignoring the local goals and needs. In the previous chapter I likened foreign funded projects to a boat that allows travel out to the sea. There may be many opportunities but there are also possible dangers which need to be assessed with proper caution.

## A context with interrelated factors

The issues discussed above are interrelated. Together they represent some of the more complex factors in the Bangladesh context of English language learning. The following diagram summarises key elements of the complex context that have been discussed in this thesis:



**Figure 9.1: Summary of various factors that shape English language teaching in Bangladesh**

In addition to being interrelated, these factors are not static. Like the currents in a river they are constantly shifting in their intensity and in the way they interact with each other. Some, like the pressure of the examination system and the disparity between rural and urban conditions of schooling, seem, at this time, to be constant and inescapable. Others, like the provisions for training and the ways the acquisition of communicative language skills could be approached, are already under review and in the process of change. What I have offered in this thesis is a snapshot in time, a charting of some of the main river currents as they are evident now. I also acknowledge that this charting is not all encompassing: there are no doubts still other currents to chart.

My argument in this thesis is that it is important to look at the whole river when planning improvement and change: it is important to be aware of all the complexities impacting on how English language is being taught in Bangladesh before investing in wholesale change and before shaping conclusions based on research of one factor alone.

### **Alignment with other people's theorisations**

Although I worked from the ground up during this study without any specific theory in mind, as I look back in the study and the reading I have done, I find similarities with several theoretical frameworks. The first of them is the concept of *Wicked Problems* (Rittel & Webber, 1973). The second is the need to evolve a Bangladesh epistemology (Alam, 2016; Thakur, 1908). The third is the concept of *Conscientization* (Freire, 1972). The fourth is the concept of *Fair Trade in Teacher Education* (Greenwood, Alam & Kabir, 2014).

### **A wicked problem**

A wicked problem, according to Rittel and Webber (1973) is one that cannot be definitively defined, may have many underlying causes, cannot be finally resolved, is interrelated with other problems, has solutions that are more or less useful rather than clearly good or bad, and that cannot be ignored as the problem is real and does need to be addressed.

Camillus (2008) stated that in a wicked problem situation often there are various parties involved each having various values and opinions. Camillus further stated that the root causes of this kind of problem are complex and involve various stakeholders.

The phenomena of English language teaching in Bangladesh can be described as a *Wicked Problem* as the phenomena is a very complex one and there is no simple or permanent solution to the problems encountered. Historically, various decisions were taken with a belief that a particular decision or line of action would solve the existing problems but it was later found that the planned innovation was not working well and in fact rather than solving the problem, has created new ones.

As discussed throughout my thesis and in other published literature many initiatives have been taken to uplift English language teaching in Bangladesh. Some of these included the introduction of communicative language teaching, adoption of various donor funded educational development projects, arranging various kinds of training for the teachers, introduction of ICT in teaching, introducing new assessment items in the national examination. Despite all these initiatives there is still repeated criticism that there is little progress made in English language teaching in Bangladesh (Ali & Walker, 2014; Chowdhury, 2010; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

There have been and are suggestions for change from various stakeholders. For example the present English examinations at the S.S.C and H.S.C. are criticised for not assessing students' listening and speaking skills. In my survey reported in Chapter Three, a majority of the participants were in favour of the inclusion of a speaking and listening component in the English part of the national examination, and research by Podder (2011) recommended inclusion of speaking and listening components in the examination. Such inclusion may prompt teachers, students, parents and other stakeholders to pay attention to speaking and listening. However a careful investigation is required to assess the feasibility of such inclusion. What infrastructures would Bangladesh need in order to implement such a test countrywide? Are there enough skilled teachers who can assess students' oral English? Such assessment might need to be localised: could it be ensured to be free from personal bias or corruption?

As I complete this thesis I read that the very recent 2017 S.S.C result saw a dramatic fall in the pass rate and in the number of students obtained GPA 5. The Education Minister in this regard stated that due to the introduction of a new method of script checking, what he called "standardisation of answer script", the pass rate has decreased from previous years. He further stated that previous evaluation method was "very faulty" (The Daily Star, 2017 May 5). The accounts I reported in Chapter Four would concur with this judgement and it seems that the recent decision addresses aspects of the problem. However, it introduced a new marking system which had not been trialled, or explained clearly. Whether the change is good or bad is beyond the scope of this discussion, but it has affected a large number of young students and there are media reports that students were not satisfied with their results and many have applied for re-assessment of their

scripts ( Prothom Alo, 2017). The solution to one part of the complex problem may have generated new problems.

The teaching of English language in Bangladesh takes place in an arena that is complex, multifaceted and this complexity needs to be taken into account when planning changes.

### **A Bangladeshi epistemology**

A growing body of international research emphasises the importance of incorporating local knowledge and epistemology while making decision about various educational related issues and policies. Ladson-Billings (2009) stressed the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. In her study she concluded that successful teachers of African-American students possess some qualities distinct from other teachers that largely involve values associated with African- American culture. Macfarlane, Macfarlane and Gillon (2015) argued that while western knowledge is based on firm theoretical bases, it is not always transferable to another context and culture. They also argued that when western knowledge is blended with local knowledge better learning outcome can be facilitated. In case of teaching English in international contexts McKay (2003) articulated the value of the inclusion of topics related to local culture and adopting methodology that suits local educational context.

The calls from grounded Bangladeshi approaches to education go back in history (Thakur, 1908), but disappeared under the pressures of colonisation and the aftermath of the separation of India. More recently postcolonial scholars like Spivak (1996) and Bharucha (1993) have highlighted the threats imposed by western epistemologies on local cultures and argued for the need to know the local context from the inside. In a recent study Alam (2016) called for the need to develop a Bangladeshi epistemology that would allow educators and researchers to address educational problems and educational changes from perspectives that were relevant to the grounded local context.

The exploration of the complexities involved in English language teaching reported in thesis and their grounding in the personalised accounts of local teachers and students offers a small contribution to the development of a Bangladeshi epistemological approach.

## **Becoming Conscientized**

One of the intentions of this study has been to move beyond pre-packaged solutions to the problems involved in effective teaching English language teaching in Bangladesh. It is my argument in this thesis that it is important to examine and understand the complexities of the social, economic, historic, institutional and international influences that impact on the context in which this teaching takes place and that shape what happens in schools. The hoped for outcome of such an exploration is not the discovery of any immediate solution to the problems that exist but rather a process of awareness building that can make the search for solutions better informed and more capable of being strategic. I see in this awareness building an echo of Freire's concept (1972) of *conscientization*.

Freire, writing from his experience of developing literacy with marginalised groups in Brazil, emphasised the importance of developing an understanding of one's own socio-cultural reality. Until such understanding was developed, he argued, people could not find ways to break out of that reality and create change. He described conscientization as "the process in which men [and women], not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and their capacity to transform that reality" (Freire, 1972a, p.51).

Research about the quality of English language teaching in Bangladesh tends to concentrate on the competencies of teachers, class room practices, and the degree to which graduates from schools can use English language functionally. These are indeed important matters. However, they are features of a more complex contextual combination of factors that have created the qualifications and skills of teachers and the legacies of school practices. Freire's work argues that the process of becoming aware of the socio-cultural forces that shape current experiences, the process of conscientization, is essential for finding ways to develop agency and become able to address overt problems. I am arguing here that the national goal of developing graduates from schools can use English language functionally requires a strong degree of conscientization.

### **Finding a *fair trade***

At the heart of the issues regarding effective teaching of the English language is the fact that English language has held and is still holding global power. That is why competency in English is desired and why neo-colonising initiatives have impact on policy, curriculum, resources, textbooks and training.

At this time in history, Bangladesh seems dependent on foreign aid and loans for its development, and it draws heavily on foreign expertise for shaping its delivery of English language teaching, I, for example, am studying at a foreign university in order to do this research about my own country. In doing so, I have the desire to use my doctoral journey to create something that will be useful to my country and the determination to resist imposing externally developed but not necessarily locally relevant norms on to the situation I am studying. I have found support for this stance in Greenwood, Alam and Kabir's (2014) concept of *fair trade in education*. Greenwood, Alam and Kabir reported a project in which a New Zealand university engaged in a loan project to take Bangladesh teacher educators as Masters students. Their study examined the respective gains to the active parties involved: the university and the students. It also interrogated the extent to which the gains to the Bangladesh students were ones that would be of practical use in developing their home contexts in ways that were in accord with local needs and aspirations. They proposed that the trade in international qualifications could only be called *fair* if both sides acquired the real gains they wanted. They emphasised the need for collaborative dialogue between two parties involved in any international educational exchange and the process of co-learning.

I relate this way of looking at fair trade to the challenge Bangladesh currently faces in its dependency on foreign loans and foreign consultants. Perhaps the dependency cannot yet be avoided, but it is important for policy makers, project negotiators, researchers and citizens generally to critically examine Bangladesh's needs and what they hope to gain through the associations. It is also important, rather than a whole acceptance of the other party's suggestions and conditions, to create the kinds of collaborative dialogues that could allow both parties to articulate their expectations and to negotiate outcomes and processes.

## **Implications**

The exploratory nature of this study and its advocacy of the need to consider the contextual complexity of the problems it examines preclude the making of recommendations for detailed actions. However, I believe that this study has a number of implications and they are discussed below.

### ***For policy***

There is already policy in place to define the goals of education and to explain the role of English language as an important component in the curriculum. It is implementation of policy that is repeatedly identified as a serious problem. The findings of this study imply that plans for implementation need to regard all the wide range of influences, problems and opportunities and not focus too narrowly on single factors. Thus when changes are planned careful investigation is required to assess the probable benefits of the intended change and whether resources are available to implement the intended change. Such investigation might avoid simplistic blaming of teachers for incompetence or parents for unconcernedness about their children's learning.

A further, more specific, implication is that if English teaching in rural areas is to be improved it requires improvement of rural teaching conditions and resources. Perhaps better incentives and rewards can be offered for qualified teachers to teach in the rural areas. It may not possible to build all the desired facilities but a living wage seems essential to attract experienced and qualified teachers. This suggestion has significant funding implications, but it is not perhaps impossible to re-align budgets to make some incremental change. Rural teaching of English perhaps also requires different approaches than those that can be expected in cities where English is widely used within the community. The suggestion that arises from the findings in this study is the factors that make rural areas different from city ones are factors that could be utilised in developing content and learning approaches that better suit rural students.

The examination system is the giant force in education in Bangladesh. It would not be easy, or perhaps even inadvisable, to get rid of it. However, policy makers need to critically consider how they use examination results and how they reinforce the



importance placed on the results. Too much emphasis on examination result compels students, teachers and parents to find ways of getting good marks in the examination regardless of what real learning occurs. If developing communicative ability in English is the prime objective then it is important to develop ways whereby communicative ability is valued in schooling and in subsequent university admission tests and job recruitment processes.

### ***For teachers***

The influence of examinations cannot be ignored and it is unrealistic that this examination culture would change overnight. However, teachers need to consider ways to balance teaching to the test and teaching language skills. They also need to balance recognition of the constraints they work with and the courage to take responsibility for their own professional inquiry and growth. Alam (2016) shows that this can occur even in a poor rural area. There may not be sufficient government support for the teachers to develop themselves professionally, but teachers can give each other the confidence, critical mentorship and the collaborative planning. For English teachers the developing of their own language skills is crucial and this is probably not something one teacher can do alone. Further investigation seems needed of how learning communities could be developed. Similarly it is important for teachers teaching in the rural areas to understand their students' socio-economic background and of the pressures many experience to help support their families. Class times, teaching content and relationships may all need to be carefully considered to allow them to participate in education.

### ***For parents***

A famous and anonymous letter has been forwarded to parents by various principals globally to accompany students' results. The letter acknowledges that tests "do not always assess all of what it is that make each of you special and unique... So enjoy your results and be very proud of these but remember there are many ways of being smart" (Klein, 2014, July 15).

This kind of letter could have great relevance to Bangladeshis parents. While parents, like teachers, are the products of a system, they could be supported to examine the ways that system creates ideologies about learning and testing. Parents need to consider what the guidebooks and notebooks that may bring success for the short time actually contribute their children's future life.

A current study of parental engagement in rural schooling by Hasnat (2016) is exploring the received discourses that seem to define parental disengagement. Hasnat argues that these discourses need to be deconstructed in order to find ways of engaging parents in their children's learning. My study suggests that deconstruction of discourse about examination success is important for all parents. After the recent publication of S.S.C results, Tajul Islam, a professor and a social psychiatrist, expressed his concern in a newspaper article about the way failure in the examination is one of the main causes of suicide among young people in Bangladesh (Islam, 2017, May 15). His concern adds urgency to the need for such deconstruction.

### ***For researchers***

What I have contributed to the exiting body of Bangladesh research about the teaching of English in Bangladesh is the sketching out of a composite picture of what I have called the currents with the context. The inference of this contribution, as I see it, is that while it is useful, and even necessary, to investigate individual components of the complex picture, it is also important to retain awareness of the wider context in which each component plays its part. There are, without doubt, further currents and landmarks to be explored and charted. And the river changes. Thus one implication for further research in the field is the continued development of a chart of the forces that impact on teaching and learning in Bangladesh, within what could be called a Bangladesh epistemological perspective. Another implication is the need to reference the particularities of the Bangladesh context in the framework of research projects that consider individual aspects of English language teaching, rather than only relating them to supposedly universal frameworks.

## **What I have learned**

Perhaps the most important learning for me is the shift in my own thinking. I started with an idea that if we can modify the existing examination at the secondary level in Bangladesh, then the majority of the problems would be solved. In the course of my doctoral journey I have learned that the issues are more complicated. While the examination is still one of the major factors to be addressed, there are other factors that impact on the effectiveness of teaching English and they are interrelated and entangled.

I have better realised the importance of understanding the local context. While international literature, theory, and methods are important to take into account, these are not always readily transferable and applicable to a Bangladesh context. So an insider's view, the development of a Bangladesh epistemological approach, as well as critical reflection on international experiences are needed to find and further develop areas of good practices inside the country.

I have learned the importance of listening to people who are directly in the field, such as teachers, students, administrators, parents. Understanding of their hopes and of the challenges they have experienced can help policy makers make grounded decisions.

The doctoral journey has helped me to develop my critical thinking and awareness. As well as learning to look for Bangladesh understandings of Bangladesh problems, I have benefitted from study in another context because it has allowed me to examine the Bangladesh context without being submerged in it. Moreover being a part of a learning community and the chance to exchange ideas with people from various countries, cultures has helped me to refine my thinking.

## **Re-visiting effectiveness**

The stories in this study have offered examples of how some teachers have attempted to overcome the obstacles that they found in the way of what they saw as effective teaching. Emdad's initiatives, Sopan's English speaking hour, Hossain's dedication to live and teach in a remote school, Saiful's attempt to implement a classroom based speaking and listening test are some of the examples. Nikhil's dedication to train teachers can be an example for other teacher trainers and policy makers.

Within the current context of Bangladesh, there are many different criteria by which teachers may be considered to be effective. The teachers named above might claim that description because they actively seek to teach students how to communicate in English as well as to pass their exams. However, teachers who teach formulaic answers to examination questions that their students can memorise are also considered to be effective by the parents and students who celebrate their survival in the all-powerful examination, and by the schools whose ranking depends on such successful memorisation. The popular media and renowned educationists often talk about the bad effects of guide books, notebooks and coaching centres, but rarely look deeply at the causes behind these. Eva and Priya's stories are illustrative of why students, parents and teachers are so prone to turn to guidebooks and coaching centres.

As I complete this account of my study, I am aware that it is perhaps less useful to ask which teachers are effective in teaching English than to ask what knowledge and skills are most needed by the students of Bangladesh and how these can best be taught.

### **My future research direction**

I started with an intention to find effective teachers beliefs, practices and day to day activities, to find how they took decisions and what they did when things went wrong. Later as the study progressed I began to understand that before studying effective teachers it is more important to chart the complexities involved in English language teaching. However the desire to investigate and report good teaching in English in some useful way remains. It could still be useful to study successful teachers, and students' personal stories. What do the successful teachers think and do? What have been the experiences and the turning points of those who have been successful in learning English? What strategies did they take, and how do understand as well as learn language?

## Final thought

I return to the metaphor of river and boatman that I presented in the introduction. Another song by Rabindranath Thakur<sup>9</sup> talks about the risk and the value of journeying on a turbulent river.

আমি মারের সাগর পাড়ি দেব বিষম ঝড়ের বায়ে	I will set sail upon this sea of trials amid a terrible storm
আমার ভয় ভাঙা এই নায়ো॥	With this fearless vessel of mine.
মাঠে বাণীর ভরসা নিয়ে ছেঁড়া পালে বুক ফুলিয়ে	With faith as my strength I venture out bravely with torn sails,
তোমার ওই পারেতেই যাবে তরী ছায়া বটের ছায়ে॥	This boat will go to where you are on the other bank where it is sheltered.
পথ আমারে সেই দেখাবে যে আমারে চায়-	The one who seeks me and my faith will show me the way -
আমি অভয় মনে ছাড়ব তরী, এই শুধু মোর দায়।	I only have to set off on this boat fearlessly, that is all I have to do.
দিন ফুরালে, জানি জানি, পৌঁছে ঘাটে দেব আমি	When the day draws to a close, I know, I will be able
আমার দুঃখ দিনের রক্ত কমল তোমার করুণ পায়ো॥	To worship your merciful presence with the beauty that grows from my pain.

In Rabindrath's song the storm brings danger and the boat is small and its sail is torn, but the boatman is determined to cross the river and has firm belief that, with whatever the resources he has, he will reach his destination. The song is a declaration of faith in the meaningfulness of life and a commitment to serve the will of the Almighty, no matter how frightening the journey may be. It is also a song of acknowledgement of the power of the river and the way it is a symbol of life.

Bangladesh has emerged from successive colonisations as a relatively poor country. It still has a lot to achieve in education. The river is turbulent, with many currents.

English language teaching in Bangladesh is reported in the literature to be fraught with many problems. Resources are scarce.

As a nation we keep our faith in the Almighty, but, in analogy to the boatman, we also need to utilise the resources we have. There are no easy or shortcut solutions but the journey needs to continue with a firm belief to reach to the destination. Learning to chart and understand the currents is one of the best resources the boatman can draw on.

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<sup>9</sup> I have long been familiar with the original Bangla song, the text and the English translation from the website <https://animikha.wordpress.com/tag/ami-marer-sagor-pari-debo/>

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## Appendices

### Effective English Teaching Questionnaire

For each statement please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by ticking the relevant box.

For an effective English teacher proficiency in oral English is more important than proficiency in reading and writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
An effective English teacher must need to have degree in English	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
An effective English teacher is someone who is well conversant in English grammar	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
An effective English teacher should have at least three years experience of teaching English	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
An effective English teacher is someone whose students do very well in the exam	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
To become an effective English teacher it is essential to know the English culture	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
An effective English teacher in Bangladesh is someone who.....	
has thorough understanding of the English Curriculum goals and objectives	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
always speaks English in the class	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
uses English as well as Bangla as a medium of instruction in the class	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
asks students to speak English from the first class	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
asks students to speak English when the students think they are confident to speak in English	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
teaches only what will be important for the final exam	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
prepares possible questions and answers for the final exam for his/her students	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
arranges mock test similar to the final test	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
follows NCTB prescribed Textbooks rigorously to teach in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
prepares materials by himself/herself to teach in the class	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
uses authentic materials and realia ( e.g.- map, picture, food, clothes) in the class	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree

uses different technologies (e.g. Computer, projector) in teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
has the ability to adopt different teaching methodologies	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
gives lectures and expect students to be an attentive listener throughout the class	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
lets students talk most of the time in the class	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
arranges group work frequently	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
prefers to give lectures than arranging group work and pair work in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
teaches grammatical rules first and then gives examples and exercises.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
uses activities where students require to understand certain grammatical rules	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
teaches simple sentence structure first before moving to complex sentence structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
arranges session to give feedback on students' mistake	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
tells students directly what the mistakes are and give correct answers	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
uses indirect hints or cues to indicate error	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
corrects students mistakes immediately when they occur	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
teaches different language skills rather than focusing on any particular skill in a single lesson	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
puts equal importance on all four skills (reading, Writing, Speaking, listening) of a language in a single lesson while he/she teaches.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
<b>Teaching practices and beliefs</b>	
The present Curriculum of English at Secondary level in Bangladesh focuses on all four (listening, speaking, reading, writing) skills of language.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
The present Curriculum of English at the Secondary level is suitable for Bangladesh.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I always speak English in my class	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I let my students talk most of the time in my class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I encourage students to work 'in groups' and 'in pairs' in my class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree

I use different teaching aids like flash cards, audio, video, etc, while I teach in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Group work is a waste of valuable class time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Group work or pair work is not very effective in my class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Students learn more when I teach them using lectures	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
While I teach, I follow the principles of Communicative Language Teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I use different technologies in the class	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I teach grammatical rules only if it is necessary.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I teach grammatical rules first and then give examples and exercises to practice.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I tell students immediately if they make any mistake and give them correct answer	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I use indirect hints or cues to indicate error	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
My Principal/Headmaster asks me to adopt teaching methods which will ensure students' good mark in the exam.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Student parents' ask me to teach in the way which will ensure their children's good marks in the exam.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
My students expect me to teach them what is more likely to come in the exam.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
My teaching style would have been different if there were no exam.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
When I prepare materials for teaching, I always consider what is important for the Examination.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I prepare possible questions and answers for the final exam for my students	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I arrange mock class test which is similar to S.S.C test format.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I teach what will help students to get good grades in the examination.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I do not teach certain passages from the textbook because I consider these less important for the examination.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
I teach different exam techniques so that students can do well in the exam.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree
Speaking and listening test needs to be included in the S.S.C examination.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> No opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Disagree

Please indicate how often you teach following skills in your English class		
I teach speaking in the class	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times a week	<input type="checkbox"/> In every English class
I teach listening in the class	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times a week	<input type="checkbox"/> In every English class
I teach reading in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times a week	<input type="checkbox"/> In every English class
I teach writing in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times a week	<input type="checkbox"/> In every English class
I teach pronunciation in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times a week	<input type="checkbox"/> In every English class
I teach vocabulary in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 times a week
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 times a week	<input type="checkbox"/> In every English class

**List upto three barriers that you think stand against effective English teaching in Bangladesh**

- 
- 
- 

My sex is ☐ Male ☐ Female

My age is ☐ under 25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46-55 ☐ Over 55

Highest degree ☐ B.A (Pass) ☐ B.A (Hons) ☐ M.A ☐ PhD ☐ others Years of  
teaching Experiences ☐ less than 1 year ☐ 1-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ more than 10 years

***Thank you for your time and cooperation***



### HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen  
Email: [human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

Ref: 2014/42/ERHEC

11 August 2014

Al Amin  
College of Education  
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Al

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "Effective English teaching: investigating teaching practices in secondary schools in Bangladesh" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have provided in your email of 11 August 2014.

Should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Surtees'.

Nicola Surtees  
Chair  
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

*"Please note that Ethical Approval and/or Clearance relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Ethical Clearance Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research."*

F E S